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THE PLACE OF MARXISM IN RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

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Evil men understand not justice:
But they that seek Jehovah understand all things.
Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity,
Than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich.

- Proverbs 28: 5.

Nobody can understand the character of the present world revolution who was not prepared for it by the Marxian analysis of bourgeois society, its contradictions and its necessary trends. It is an experience which can be made daily, that people who are lacking in Marxian education, directly or indirectly, are utterly confused by the rise of Communism and Fascism and by the present world catastrophe. They simply cannot understand the trends in the former structure of society which with dialectical (not mechanical) necessity have brought about the present situation. They explain it as the result of bad accidents created by bad men. Religious Socialism, with the tool of the Marxian analysis of society, brought up to date, is able to give a meaning to the present world revolution.

- Paul Tillich,
"Marxism and Christian Socialism,"
Christianity and Society, Spring, 1942, p. 18.

In the formation of a class in radical chains, a class which finds itself in bourgeois society, but which is not of it, an order which shall break up all orders, a sphere which possesses a universal character by virtue of its universal suffering, which lays claim to no special right, because no particular wrong but wrong in general is committed upon it, which can no longer invoke a historical title, but only a human title, which stands not in a one-sided antagonism to the consequences, but in a many-sided antagonism to the assumptions of the German community, a sphere finally which cannot emancipate itself without emancipating all the other spheres of society, which represents in a word the complete loss of mankind, and can therefore only redeem itself through the complete redemption of mankind.

- Karl Marx,
Selected Essays,
translated by H. J. Stenning.
(London: Leonard Parsons, 1926), p. 37.

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INTRODUCTION

Profound changes are attending the re-formulation of religious thought in the light of the present crisis, whether it be the thought shaped by the Christian tradition or that elaborated in a naturalistic tradition. Nor is it difficult to find reasons for these changes. While a full explanation would be a momentous task in itself, it cannot be denied that the world-shaking events of this century have made a definite impression on the more progressive theologians of the present day. Among these events one need not go far afield to select the two world wars of this century, the business depression of the 1930's, and finally the emergence of the Soviet Union.

Perhaps the most profound result of these social disturbances has been the reconsideration of liberal theology steeped in its doctrine of the natural goodness of man reflecting the goodness of a Divine Father. The stark reality of social evils brought about by men who were at times totally oblivious of the net results of their actions, has opened new vistas of perversion as the natural concomitant of man's intrinsic freedom. Man is a social being conditioned by social forces, and perfectionist doctrines that attempt to nullify the impact of these social forces are more and more seen to be little more than individualistic illusions. In the face of this criticism of the liberal doctrine of man, religious thinkers were compelled to re-evaluate the place of man in his social setting. In so doing, these thinkers were bound to come into rather close contact with a social philosophy that had claimed ever since its inception to formulate

the place of man in that social setting. It is for this reason that re-formulations of the doctrine of man on the part of various theological disciplines have been affected by Marxism. That is not to say that these disciplines absorbed Marxism in toto; but they did find certain aspects of Marxism relevant in explaining the shortcomings of nineteenth century liberalism. Some of these theologians accepted certain aspects of Marxism with various degrees of reinterpretation, as will be seen in the following pages. The study of these syntheses of religious truths with a social philosophy that claims to nullify all religious truth is in itself a fascinating study. The widespread interest in the subject is a tribute to the intellectual and philosophical vigor of the thinkers who have attempted to formulate these new syntheses, in fact an undeniable indication of the virility of religious thought today.

Hardly a month passes but religious journals contain in one form or another articles concerned with the evaluation of programs of social reform. In not a few instances, these evaluations mention the Marxian categories specifically. Professor Reinhold Niebuhr has on more than one occasion in his numerous articles in The Nation examined critically and yet appreciatively Marxian theories and programs of action. Again, in a recent issue of Religious Education, Professor George A. Coe, Honorary President of the Religious Education Association, spoke in the most forthright manner of a "bottleneck" in religion, this bottleneck being nothing less than the issue of economic power versus ethical ideals. A perplexing situation is involved here. Says Professor Coe:

My own opinion is that we are confronted by an inescapable dilemma of the utmost sharpness. We shall either enter into and promote the cause of an ethical re-distribution of economic power, or we shall become purveyors of religious

sentiment as a substitute for righteousness. We shall try to move on from what democracy we already have towards economic classlessness, or else, relinquishing the ethical gains that the religious-education movement has made in the last half century, we shall commit the spiritual forgery of putting the image of God upon the coins of a privileged class.¹

A more direct reference to programs of action which stem from Marxian philosophy is found in the same issue of the same journal in the brilliant article by Liston Pope, Assistant Professor of Social Ethics, Yale Divinity School: "The Social Creed of the Churches and the Soviet Constitution."²

Examples could be multiplied of the impact of Marxism on religious thought as revealed in the pages of religious journals, but a more complete evaluation of this impact is left for the following pages of this Thesis.

We propose to approach the subject by devoting a chapter to a summary of Marxian philosophy, ignoring the quarrels of the various schools of Marxism, and basing our discussion on the assumption that the most complete elaboration of Marxian philosophy up to the present is found in Marxism-Leninism. We shall then discuss in some detail both the appreciative responses and the critiques of Marxism at the hands of religious thinkers. We shall select a larger number of these from various Christian traditions, and shall add a smaller number from the humanistic tradition in religion. The reason a smaller number of humanists come under consideration is that humanistic thinkers have not faced the Marxian issue in as thorough a manner as their more explicitly theological brethren. In a final chapter, we shall summarize the findings of these thinkers in their approach to Marxian philosophy; and in the light of these findings we shall

¹George A. Coe, "'Bottleneck' in Religion," Religious Education (January-February, 1943), p. 14.

²Ibid., p. 40.

give our own critique and appreciation of the place of Marxism in religious thought.

CHAPTER I

WHAT IS MARXISM?

Marxism as an economic and philosophical system of thought involves a rich complexity of doctrines, just as Christianity involves a number of doctrines. The difficulty is that proponents of either system have usually magnified some of these doctrines at the expense of others. The exaggeration of some Marxian doctrines, even their distortion, is responsible for the various Marxian parties and the quarrels that rival in intensity the controversies of the Christian sects in days gone by. We do not propose to enter into these internal dissensions, but wish to state as far as possible in the words of their proponents the essential Marxian categories, which, when understood as a system, make up the total philosophy of Marxism.

The labor theory of value.-- Students who have learned the marginal theory of value from classical economics will be ill prepared to understand the labor theory of value implied in Marxism. That is because Marx intended his theory of value to serve a very definite purpose. Marx saw the production of commodities as the main fact about capitalist production. The commodity was the cell, the nucleus, the nexus of the whole process of production. It was the essential social fact linking worker and capitalist. Hence he worked out a theory of the value of commodities in order to set forth his view of the essential injustice involved in capitalist production. A complete statement would mean summarizing the three volumes of Capital, a strenuous task reserved only for expert scholarly Marxists. We shall con-

tent ourselves with the very barest statements of the theory.

Marx approaches his discussion from the point of view of the exchange value of commodities:

We have seen that when commodities are exchanged, their exchange value manifests itself as something totally independent of their use-value. . . . A use value, or useful article, therefore, has value only because human labour in the abstract has been embodied or materialised in it. How, then, is the magnitude of the value to be measured? Plainly, by the quantity of the value-creating substance, the labour, contained in the article.¹

From the measure of the exchange value of commodities, Marx therefore arrives at his doctrine of the value of a commodity being the amount of human labour embodied in it. Why did he arrive at this conclusion? Because he wished to produce a theory of value which would present to the worker in the process of manufacturing commodities an embodiment of his exploitation. Marx exhibits a terrible directness in his theory of labor. He is even more direct in the theory of surplus-value. This is Marx's term for profit, but he prefers to name it "surplus-value" precisely because he wants profit to be connected with the value created by labor-power, and thus derived strictly from labor's efforts. How does he accomplish this?

He does it by treating labor-power as a commodity, or rather by stating that the capitalists treat it as such. Just as any other commodity, its own value is determined by the labor-time necessary for its production, that is, the physical maintenance and reproduction of the worker. Now, when the employer consumes the labor-power of the worker, he is able to extract from that worker a surplus-value beyond the minimum required to keep the worker going. For the sake of illustration, let us suppose the laborer merely uses half a day to produce his clothing,

¹Karl Marx, Capital, Vol. I, chap. i, as quoted in A Handbook of Marxism, ed. Emile Burns (New York: Random House), p. 408.

food, and other necessities of life. His employer then gives him as wages the equivalent in money of this half-day's work. But of course the laborer has worked a whole day. And this is how Marx derives surplus-value, or rather, how the employer appropriates it:

But the past labour that is embodied in the labour-power [purchased], and the living labour that it can call into action; the daily cost of maintaining it, and its daily expenditure in work, are two totally different things. . . . The fact that half a day's labour is necessary to keep the labourer alive during 24 hours, does not in any way prevent him from working a whole day. Therefore, the value of labour-power, and the value which that labour-power creates in the labour process, are two entirely different magnitudes; and this difference of the two values was what the capitalist had in view, when he was purchasing the labour-power.²

The accumulation of surplus-value is the driving force of the whole economy, the expanding force which conquers frontiers, colonies, promotes nationalism and finally imperialism. But the reference to the term surplus-value denotes immediately the value which was created by the worker, and appropriated not by him but by his employer. There is thus a relationship of exploitation between employer and worker, a relationship that is hidden by the necromancy which Marx in his picturesque language called the "fetishism of commodities." What Marx intended by such a phrase is pointed out by Sidney Hook:

The whole of capitalist economy consists of a process in which things carry on, so to speak, behind man's back. It is a process which makes a mockery of man's strivings for security, comfort and peace by producing unemployment, want and war. The conjuncture of the market does not merely affect prices but life, love, home, education, morals--the most intimate personal relationships. Instead of the instruments of production being utilized by human beings for collective social purposes, in capitalist society human beings, even though they are nominally legally free agents, are utilized as instruments of production and by machines for the manufacture of bigger and better machines. That is what they tend to become in the practice and theory of commodity-producing societies. This is what Marx means when he calls bourgeois society a "fetishism of commodities" and the orthodox

²Karl Marx, Capital (Chicago: Kerr, 1906-09), I, 215 f.

"science" of political economy, its theology.³

All the interminable discussions of value and surplus-value which present a forbidding appearance in the first volume of Capital have therefore the purpose of revealing this fetishism of commodities. But this cold, scientific objectivity in Marx really hides a strong ethical note. The pity is that this note only breaks through here and there in Marx's writings. It does break through with the passion of an Amos in certain parts of The Communist Manifesto:

The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage-labourers.

The bourgeoisie has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation to a mere money relation. . . . All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life and his relations with his kind.⁴

The doctrine of the class-struggle.-- The extortion of surplus-value by the employer of labor, that is, the capitalist, produces an antagonism between labor and capital. This antagonism, which Marx did not invent but which he merely described, is bound to prove the source of far-reaching transformations in future history. It is a class antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat, and the definition of these classes is given by Marx and Engels as follows:

By bourgeoisie is meant the class of modern capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage-labour. By proletariat, the class of modern wage-labourers who, having no means of production of their own,

³Sidney Hook, The Meaning of Marx, A Symposium (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1934), p. 64.

⁴Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, The Communist Manifesto, from A Handbook of Marxism (New York: Random House), p. 26.

are reduced to selling their labour power in order to live.⁵ Marx, however, claimed that he did not originate the theory of the class struggle. This he made clear in a letter which he wrote to a friend in 1852:

As far as I am concerned, the honor does not belong to me for either having discovered the existence of classes in present society or of the struggle between the classes. Bourgeois historians a long time before me expounded the historical development of this class war and the bourgeois economists the economical structure of classes. What I did was to prove the following: (1) That the existence of classes is connected only with certain historical struggles which are characteristic of the development of production. (2) That class war indispensably leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat. (3) That this dictatorship is only a transition to the destruction of any classes and to society without classes.⁶

Thus Marx sets down his own contributions to the idea of the class-struggle, and incidentally shows what has been for the most part ignored by revisionist Marxists, that he adhered to the necessity of a dictatorship of the proletariat in the transition from capitalism to socialism.

The class-struggle is not to be understood as a blind struggle between unskilled laborers and bourgeoisie. It does assume many varied forms in accordance with the many-sided development of economic processes and class relationships. Labor problems, strikes, hunger marches, growth of trade-unions, of labor parties, are examples of it in the field of labor. Changes in the policies of liberal parties, such as The New Deal in the United States, and the association of liberals with socialists and communists in the ill-fated Popular Front in France and Spain are also manifestations of the historical development of the class-struggle. No less so are the various developments of

⁵Ibid., p. 22.

⁶Karl Marx, Letter to Weidemeir, dated March 5, 1852. Quoted from Nikolai Lenin, The State and Revolution (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1929), p. 140.

Christian socialism and religious socialism, with a deepening of the doctrine of man and a reinterpretation of traditional Christian doctrines. Apart from the conditioning influence of social changes having their foundations in the class-struggle, these evolutions in labor, liberal, and religious movements could not be completely understood.

Marx apparently interpreted the class struggle in a most realistic manner. For he did not hesitate to speak of a dictatorship of the proletariat, a phrase which has been seized upon by the Russian communists with particular force. Whether Marx had in mind the use which has been made of it by these communists is a moot point. Lenin, in his State and Revolution seems to make an extensive application of this doctrine, over against the social-democrats who, in his mind, were distorters of Marxism. One may object, however, and ask: Is not the state in its legal instruments the area where antagonisms between proletariat and bourgeoisie can be rectified without the necessity of the vast social change implied in the transition from capitalism to socialism? This leads to the question: What is the role of the state in Marxism?

The doctrine of the state and its "withering away."--

The Marxian doctrine of the state is a concrete example of the fact that the thinking of Marx and Engels was dominated by the idea of the exploitation of the working class by the bourgeoisie. This subjection of the working class was so clearly impressed upon their minds that they tended to regard every feature of society in terms of this subjection. The study of the Paris Commune, in particular, was conducive to their development of the theory of the state, and Marxian writings since 1871 have never ignored the Commune in developing the conception of the state

power and its place in the antagonisms of the classes. Engels in 1884 wrote as follows:

As the State arose out of the need to hold class antagonisms in check, but as it, at the same time, arose in the midst of the conflict of these classes, it is, as a rule, the State of the most powerful, economically dominant class, which by virtue thereof becomes also the dominant class politically, and thus acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class. Thus the ancient State was, above all, the slaveowners' State for holding down the slaves, as a feudal State was the organ of the nobles for holding down the peasantry, bondmen and serfs, and the modern representative State is the instrument of the exploitation of wage-labour by capital. By way of exception, however, there are periods when the warring classes so nearly attain equilibrium that the State power, ostensibly appearing as a mediator, assumes for the moment a certain independence in relation to both. Such were the absolute monarchies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which balanced the nobles and burghers against each other; the Bonapartism of the First and particularly the Second Empire in France, which played off the proletariat against the bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie against the proletariat.⁷

It would be interesting to speculate on the proposition that the present Roosevelt administration represents a balancing of the rival claims of bourgeoisie and proletariat. The intensification of class antagonisms, however, will compel the state power to side with one or the other of the classes. It is preposterous to imagine that the state would side with the proletariat unless it were captured by the proletariat. The recent history of the rise of radical movements in France and Germany shows that when the bourgeoisie is threatened by a socialist movement which, if allowed to grow, would capture the state, this same bourgeoisie uses the legal and administrative and even military machinery of the state to prevent the further growth of a socialist movement, and even to smash it. The history of German Fascism is a case in point, and it is significant to note that the defeat of labor movements at the hands of dictatorial movements assisted

⁷Friedrich Engels, The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, as quoted in A Handbook of Marxism, ed. Emile Burns (New York: Random House), p. 330.

financially by capital was sufficiently impressive to cause certain political thinkers to revise their views as to the state power. For instance, Professor Harold Laski, of the London School of Economics, in his book The State in Theory and Practice⁸ shows his acceptance of the Marxian conception of the state.

A most interesting question, however, is this: What happens to the state when the proletariat achieves victory over the bourgeoisie? The answer given by Marxian theory is as follows:

The proletariat seizes political power and turns the means of production into state property.

But, in doing this, it abolishes itself as proletariat, abolishes all class distinctions and class antagonisms, abolishes also the state as state. Society thus far, based upon class antagonisms, had need of the state. That is, of an organization of the particular class which was pro tempore the exploiting class, an organization for the purpose of preventing any interference from without with the existing conditions of production, and therefore, especially, for the purpose of forcibly keeping the exploited classes in the condition of oppression corresponding with the given mode of production (slavery, serfdom, wage labour). The state was the official representative of society as a whole, the gathering of it together into a visible embodiment. But it was this only in so far as it was the state of that class which itself represented, for the time being, society as a whole; in ancient times, the state of slave-owning citizens; in the Middle Ages, the feudal lords; in our own time, the bourgeoisie. When at last it becomes the real representative of the whole of society, it renders itself unnecessary. As soon as there is no longer any social class to be held in subjection; as soon as class rule and the individual struggle for existence based upon our present anarchy in production, with the collisions and excesses arising from these, are removed, nothing more remains to be repressed, and a special repressive force, a state, is no longer necessary. The first act by virtue of which the state really constitutes itself the representative of the whole of society--the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society--this is, at the same time, the last independent act as a state. State interference in social relations becomes, in one domain after another, superfluous, and then dies out of itself; the government of persons is replaced by the administration of things, and by the conduct of processes of production. The state is not "abolished." It dies out.⁹

⁸London: George Allen & Unwin, 1934.

⁹Frederick Engels, Socialism Utopian and Scientific (New York: International Publishers, 1935; first German edition, 1882), pp. 69-70.

This is the classical doctrine of the withering away of the State as an instrument of oppression of one class by another, to be replaced by institutions for "the administration of things" and for "the conduct of processes of production." Assuming for the moment the correctness of this presentation, a moot question is: How soon does the state die out? Does it die out immediately upon the assumption of power by the proletariat, or is the dying-out process a prolonged process taking decades of time if not centuries?

Lenin attempted to give an answer to this question. He studied carefully all the Marxian documents having to do with the capture of the state power by the proletariat and he summarized his findings in The State and Revolution. On this question of the withering away of the state, he writes:

Only in Communist society, when the resistance of the capitalists has finally been broken, when the capitalists have disappeared, when there are no longer any classes (that is, when there is no difference between the members of society in respect of their social means of production) only then "does the State disappear and one can speak of freedom." Only then will be possible and will be realized a really full democracy, a democracy without any exceptions. And only then will democracy itself begin to wither away in virtue of the simple fact that, freed from capitalist slavery, from the innumerable horrors, savagery, absurdities and infamies of capitalist exploitation, people will gradually become accustomed to the observation of the elementary rules of social life, known for centuries, repeated for thousands of years in all sermons. They will become accustomed to their observance without force, without constraint, without subjection, without the special apparatus for compulsion which is called the State.¹⁰

To the charge that this presentation of the future is a utopian illusion, Lenin replies:

We are not utopians, and we do not in the least deny the possibility and inevitability of excesses by individual persons, and equally the need to suppress such excesses. But, in the first place, for this no special machine, no special

¹⁰Nikolai Lenin, Imperialism, The State and Revolution (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1929; first Russian edition, August, 1917), pp. 193-194.

instrument of repression is needed. This will be done by the armed nation itself, as simply and as readily as any crowd of civilized people, even in modern society, parts a pair of combatants or does not allow a woman to be outraged. And, secondly, we know that the fundamental social cause of excesses which violate the rules of social life is the exploitation of the masses, their want and their poverty. With the removal of this chief cause, excesses will inevitably begin to "wither away." We do not know how quickly and in what stages, but we know that they will be withering away. With their withering away, the State will also wither away.¹¹

Hence, no clear answer can be given in terms of exact period of time for the withering away of the State. Individual excesses will be suppressed by the "armed nation itself," and presumably as long as these excesses last, an armed nation will be required. But Lenin adds: "We know that they will be withering away." Is there not a large element of utopian thought here? This important question will be considered in the chapter entitled, "The Place of Marxism in the Thought of Reinhold Niebuhr."

The materialist conception of history.-- The doctrines of Marxism given in the preceding pages imply the all-important influence of class antagonisms and their reflection in the character of the state, and the final withering away of the state at some future time not specified. Such a view implies the influence of class antagonisms on historical development itself. It is given by Engels as follows:

The materialist conception of history starts from the proposition that the production of the means to support human life and next to production, the exchange of things produced, is the basis of all social structure; that in every society that has appeared in history, the manner in which wealth is produced and society divided into classes or orders, is dependent upon what is produced, how it is produced, and how the products are exchanged. From this point of view, the final causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in men's brains, not in man's better insight into eternal right and justice, but in changes in the mode of production and exchange. They are to be sought, not in the philosophy, but in the economics of each particular

¹¹Ibid., p. 195.

epoch. The growing perceptions that existing social institutions are unreasonable and unjust, that reason has become unreasonable, and right wrong, is only proof that in the modes of production and exchange changes have silently taken place, with which the social order, adapted to earlier economic conditions, is no longer in keeping.¹²

This conception has sometimes been attacked as denoting sheer economic determinism. Marx and Engels did indeed admit in later years that they had overstressed the economic factor, and that the influence of juridical, political, and religious factors would make themselves felt in the course of social development. But they reiterated their theory that in the final analysis the economic factor would supersede these other factors:

According to the materialistic conception of history, the production and reproduction of real life constitutes in the last instance the determining factor of history. Neither Marx nor I ever maintained more. Now when someone comes along and distorts this to mean that the economic factor is the sole determining factor he is converting the former proposition into a meaningless, abstract and absurd phrase. The economic situation is the basis but the various factors of the superstructure--the political forms of the class struggles and their results--constitutions, etc., established by victorious classes after hard-won battles--legal forms, and even the reflexes of all these struggles in the brain of the participants, political, jural, philosophical theories, religious conceptions which have been developed into systematic dogmas, all these exercise an influence upon the course of historical struggles, and in many cases determine for the most part their form. There is a reciprocity between all these factors in which, finally, through the endless array of contingencies (i.e., of things and events whose inner connection with one another is so remote, or so incapable of proof, that we may neglect it, regarding it as non-existent) the economic movement asserts itself as necessary. Were this not the case, the application of the theory to any given historical period would be easier than the solution of a simple equation of the first degree.¹³

The pure economic factor is therefore modified by political, legal, philosophical, and even religious forms and conceptions in the minds of the participants. Yet eventually, the

¹²Engels, Socialism Utopian and Scientific, p. 54.

¹³Frederick Engels. Letter to J. Bloch, London, September, 21, 1890. See Appendix, Sidney Hook, Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx (New York: The John Day Company, 1933), pp. 333-334.

economic factor of the class-struggle stamps itself on these forms, and even presents itself in terms of these forms. The very fact that the British Labor Party is strongly influenced by Christian ethical symbols is due to just this type of interaction. The ethical motivations of the leaders of the British Labor Party, such as Arthur Henderson, Keir Hardie, to mention but two of them, were derived from the Christian tradition. Yet, the meaning for their time of these ethical motivations were thrown into high relief with the growth of the British proletariat and the need to defend its interests by means of a political party. It is significant to note that the more naive religious consciousness, in the sense of Christian moralism, all too often believes in ethical and social changes without the need of labor movements, not to mention class struggles. It is precisely in the sense of a repudiation of this naive moralism that Charles Clayton Morrison's outburst is to be understood. His statement is thus an approach and a partial vindication of the materialist conception of history:

Certainly the naive assumption that we can sit at the feet of Jesus on the Galilean hillside, listen to his teaching about the law of love, and go forth straightway to practice that law in our daily life--that naive assumption is now seen to be an illusion. Christian people do not practice the ethics of Jesus and they are awaking to the fact that they cannot do so. The kind of world in which we live requires us to do things which contradict Christ's teachings. Many of the best Christians live in a privileged status which cannot be squared with the law of love. There has been a vast deal of beating about the bush in our effort to conceal this fact, and to reconcile the law of love with the kind of conduct required by the actual world in which we live. I believe the most wholesome thing we can do is to admit frankly and honestly that the thing cannot be done. Happily, we are frankly and honestly admitting it. On all sides our talk on this subject is becoming realistic.¹⁴

The Marxist will not lose any time in suggesting that the

¹⁴Charles Clayton Morrison, "The Crisis in Christianity," The Christian Century, September 26, 1934, p. 1205.

expression "the kind of world in which we live" used by Mr. Morrison is precisely given by his materialist conception of history. Nay more, he would say that the ethical or philosophical assumptions which are assumed to move history must be looked upon as ideology. Frederick Engels' exposition of this conception should be given here for it will recur in the chapter entitled, "The Place of Marxism in the Thought of Paul Tillich":

Ideology is a process which of course is carried on with the consciousness of so-called thinkers but with a false consciousness. The real driving force which moves it remains unconscious, otherwise it would not be an ideological process. It imaginatively creates for itself false or apparent driving forces. Because it is a thought process, it derives both its content and form from pure thought, either its own or that of its predecessors. It works with pure conceptual material which it unwittingly takes over as the product of thought and therefore does not investigate its relations to a process further removed from and independent of thought. Indeed it seems to be self-evident that since all activity is mediated by thought, it is ultimately grounded in thought. The historical ideologist (and historical means here political, jurial, philosophical, theological, in short, all domains which belong to society and not merely to nature)--the historical ideologist is confronted in every scientific field by material which has been built up independently out of the thought of earlier generations, and which through the minds of these successive generations has undergone an independent development peculiar to itself. External facts from this or other fields may have contributed to determine this development, but these facts, according to the tacit presuppositions made, are themselves mere fruits of a thought process. And so we still remain in the realm of pure thought which has succeeded so well in digesting the hardest facts.

It is this appearance of an independent history of state constitutions, systems of law, of ideologies in every special field, which, above all, has blinded so many people.¹⁵

As we shall see later, this aspect of Marxian theory, much more than the Marxian conception of the state, or the labor theory of value, or the philosophy of dialectical materialism, is the one which has been appropriated by dialectical theology.

This concept of ideology is, of course, implied in the very quintessence of Marxian theory, for any element in the con-

¹⁵Frederick Engels, Letter to F. Mehring, July 14, 1893. Hook, Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx, p. 341.

sciousness of man not directly related to the production of the material means of life is regarded by Marxism as being "false consciousness" and therefore ideology. This quintessence of Marxism is given by Marx in the following terms:

The mode of production of the material means of existence conditions the whole process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, it is their social existence that determines their consciousness.¹⁶

On this basis, the concept of ideology is a rich and fruitful approach to modern problems, throwing a floodlight on many heretofore puzzling phenomena.

The fact that a ruling class will maintain itself in power, resist social change in all its manifold manifestations such as progressive labor movements, civil liberties societies, social pronouncements of churches, trades-unions, etc., and will do so with perfect sincerity, is explained by the Marxian conception of ideology. It means an unconsciously constructed smoke-screen of ideas that veil the actual historical situation and provide bourgeois or divine sanctions for the status quo.

"Ideology" is a much hated word, which incites to fury, as does every word whose meaning points to a reality which we attempt to cover by our self-absolutizing tendencies. Ideologies are therefore opinions such as these: the state claiming to be above the battle; the attitude of the business man who is kind-hearted and a loyal church supporter and on this basis claims to be a good Christian; the type of liberalism that assumes that if only we could wait for sufficient understanding to be acquired there would be no need of conflict; the sort of idealism which claims that only methods of pure persuasion are justifiable; idealist

¹⁶Karl Marx, A Contribution to "The Critique of Political Economy." First published in 1859. From A Handbook of Marxism, p. 372.

philosophy which claims that ultimate reality is the form of Good above and beyond the conflicts present "here below"; the colonizing idea as the "white man's burden"; the assumption that if only we put our trust in science, all will be well.

The ideologies of ruling groups and of those who depend on ruling groups imply a universalizing tendency which is actually negated in history. The universal assumptions of ruling groups are defense mechanisms whereby they maintain their power and prevent the exchange of power from their hands into that of society as a whole. Man is therefore at the mercy of these assumptions, which because of their ideological nature, prevent him from seeing his true relation in the social process. He seems to be at the mercy of blind forces which control his destiny. The Marxian thesis, however, is that when man assumes control of the means of wealth production in the classless society, he will then, and then only, control his destiny:

The laws of his own social action, hitherto standing face to face with man as laws of nature foreign to and dominating him, will then be used with full understanding, and so mastered by him. Man's own social organisation, hitherto confronting him as a necessity imposed by nature and history, now becomes the result of his own free action. The extraneous objective forces that have hitherto governed history pass under the control of man himself. Only from that time will man himself, more and more consciously, make his own history-- only from that time will the social causes set in movement by him have, in the main and in a constantly growing measure, the results intended by him. It is the ascent of man from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom.¹⁷

Dialectical materialism as a philosophy.-- Beyond the labor theory of value, the class struggle, the materialist conception of history, and the theory of ideology, Marxism implies a definite philosophy of the universe, which goes by the rather awe-inspiring name of dialectical materialism. Marxists are disagreed

¹⁷Frederick Engels, Socialism Utopian and Scientific (New York: International Publishers, 1935. First German Edition, 1882), pp. 72-73.

as to whether this term is really part of the Marxian system, or merely a vestigial remnant from Marx's youth when he was influenced by Hegelian categories. The Marxians before World War I were inclined to take the latter position. However, due to the work of Lenin and other Russian Marxists, it has been re-established as an integral part of the Marxian outlook.

The word "dialectic" is ultimately derived from the word dialogue, and implies a clarification of ideas through the interaction between two forces struggling for expression, such as we find in the persons engaged in a dialogue. One force may be called the thesis, and the other the antithesis, and through a process of movement, the two become sharply defined and stand in opposition to each other. Out of the interaction of thesis and antithesis arises the synthesis, which is the thesis reaffirmed on a higher level, when the process repeats itself. In Hegel's thinking, the dialectical movement was applied to the pure idea manifesting itself in the world. But in Marxian theory, the Hegelian dialectic was turned upside down. Marx and Engels rejected the idealistic character of Hegel, and utilized the form of his philosophy, and applied it to the real world. Engels more than Marx made explicit this re-formulation:

We comprehended the concepts in our heads once more materialistically--as images of real things instead of regarding the real things as images of this or that stage of development of the absolute concept. Thus dialectics reduced itself to the science of the general laws of motion--both of the external world and of human thought--two sets of laws which are identical in substance, but differ in their expression in so far as the human mind can apply them consciously, while in nature and also up to now for the most part in human history, these laws assert themselves unconsciously in the form of external necessity in the midst of an endless series of seeming accidents. Thereby the dialectic of the concept itself became merely the conscious reflex of the dialectical motion of the real world and the dialectic of Hegel was placed upon its head; or rather, turned off its head, on which it was standing before, and placed upon its feet again. And this materialistic dialectic for years has been

our best working tool and our sharpest weapon.¹⁹

Again,

The great basic thought that the world is not to be comprehended as a complex of ready-made things, but as a complex of processes, in which the things apparently stable no less than their mind-images in our heads, the concepts, go through an uninterrupted change of coming into being and passing away, in which, in spite of all seeming accidents and of all temporary retrogression, a progressive development asserts itself in the end--this great fundamental thought has, especially since the time of Hegel, so thoroughly permeated ordinary consciousness that in this generality it is scarcely ever contradicted. But to acknowledge this fundamental thought in words and to apply it in reality in detail to each domain of investigation are two different things.²⁰

It is interesting to note that Engels is aware of the difficulty of applying dialectics to the investigation of social problems, especially the detailed ramifications of a social issue as perceived by various strata of society. We shall return to this subject when taking up Lenin.

The term "materialism" in the philosophy is one which may seem puzzling when one considers the bankruptcy of reductive materialism. It is necessary to point out that the materialism involved in Marxism has little to do with that nineteenth-century materialism which attempted to reduce mental and spiritual phenomena to molecular motions. Materialism for Engels was opposed to idealism mainly on the question of the relation of being to thinking:

The question of the position of thinking in relation to being, a question which, by the way, had played a great part also in the scholasticism of the Middle Ages, the question: which is primary, spirit or nature--that question, in relation to the Church, was sharpened into this: "Did god create the world or has the world been in existence eternally?"

The answers which the philosophers gave to this question split them into two great camps. Those who asserted the primacy of spirit to nature and, therefore, in the last instance,

¹⁹Frederick Engels, "Ludwig Feuerbach," Karl Marx Selected Works, ed. by V. Adoratsky (New York: International Publishers, n.d.), I, 452-453.

²⁰Ibid., p. 453.

assumed world creation in some form or other comprised the camp of idealism. The others, who regarded nature as primary, belong to the various schools of materialism.

These two expressions, idealism and materialism, primarily signify nothing more than this; and here also they are not used in any other sense.²¹

Dialectical materialism, therefore, implies a dialectical movement of processes of the material world in such a way that new qualities arise at each dialectical synthesis. Each dialectical whole has unique qualities in its own right and on its own level, and it is impossible to read these qualities into lower levels of organization. The doctrine of emergence is therefore part of dialectical materialism. Novelty arises through the emergence of new qualities dependent on a new structural organization. Dialectical materialism is therefore much more closely allied to evolutionary naturalism and emergent evolution than to old-fashioned reductive materialism:

The recognition that the laws of mechanics, biology, and other sciences contain unique qualitative elements whose analysis demands special explanatory categories is the great differentiating mark between "vulgar" and dialectical materialism. On this issue, dialectical materialism parallels the positions taken by the philosophies of emergent evolution and emergent naturalism in England and the United States.²²

We could show in greater detail the implications of dialectical materialism but enough has been given to make clear its general character. It is, as all philosophy is, a way of relating mind and matter in a world-system of interrelationship and development. It is interesting to note that, because of its seemingly abstract and philosophical character, some scientists have been drawn to its investigation in an attempt to clarify their own scientific problems, and have thus allied themselves to

²¹Ibid., p. 431.

²²Sydney Hook, "Dialectical Materialism," Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, ed. by Edwin R. A. Seligman (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935), X, 212.

the Marxian outlook not primarily through actual participation in social struggles, but through the utilization of dialectics as a mental discipline.²³ That is not to say, however, that scientists converted to dialectical materialism are guilty of a new "ideology," for they are led through the study of dialectics to the more practical aspects of Marxism. For instance, in their investigation of the place of science in society, they bring to the fore the conditioning influence of social processes on the role of science itself in society, and thus help to break down the "ideology" of science as a discipline immaculately conceived and standing above the battle. The works of J. D. Bernal, J. G. Crowther, H. Levy, and D. J. Struik are ample testimony to this fact.

The contribution of Lenin.-- As mentioned above, Lenin was instrumental in recovering from the works of Marx and Engels the meaning of dialectical materialism as a world-philosophy. His contribution would probably be regarded by the orthodox communist as something like this: "Lenin raised the Marxian theory to the stage of the proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. He exposed the reformism of the second international, re-established the correct Marxian views on the theories of the class struggle and the state and revolution. He raised the issue of the liberation of colonial peoples as an important step in the opposition to imperialism. He laid the foundations of the first socialist state." Whatever may be the correctness or incorrectness of these assertions, they omit the unique quality

²³For a fuller statement of dialectical materialism, see John Lewis (ed.), A Textbook of Marxist Philosophy (London: Victor Gollancz Limited, 1937). For an investigation of this philosophy by British scientists and philosophers, see H. Levy et al., Aspects of Dialectical Materialism (London: Watts & Co., 1934); also J. B. S. Haldane, The Marxist Philosophy and the Sciences (New York: Random House, 1939).

in Lenin which makes him stand head and shoulder, in our opinion, above all living Marxists. The peculiar "Leninist" quality in Lenin is given by his wife and co-worker as follows:

To be able to study new situations and problems, in the light of the experience of the revolutionary struggle of the world proletariat, to apply Marxist method to the analysis of new concrete situations--that is the special substance of Leninism. Unfortunately, this aspect of the matter has not been sufficiently elucidated by concrete facts, though a good deal has been written on the subject.

There has still been less illustration in the Press of another aspect of Lenin's approach, in estimating revolutionary events, namely, the ability to perceive the concrete reality and to distinguish the collective opinion of the fighting masses. This, according to Lenin, is a decisive factor in practical and concrete questions of future policy.²⁴

The clearest indication of Lenin's genius in this approach to various strata is given in his too much neglected work: Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder, published in 1920 as a sharp rebuke to the incipient communist parties of the Western world. It is a pity that the communist movement never learned to apply the lessons of this important work, for much confusion and controversy in the labor forces could have been avoided had it been known by self-styled Marxists. For Lenin, Marxism was not a mechanical theory to be learned automatically by the proletariat. Looking back over the history of movements of revolt in Russia he writes:

Russia achieved Marxism, the only correct revolutionary theory, virtually through suffering, by a half century of unprecedented torment and sacrifice, of unprecedented revolutionary heroism, incredible energy, devoted searching, study, testing in practice, disappointment, verification and comparison with European experience.²⁵

It is on the basis of this experience that Lenin was able to ridicule the communists in France, Holland, Germany, and

²⁴Nadezhda K. Krupskaya, Memories of Lenin, trans. E. Verney (New York: International Publishers, 1930), p. 189.

²⁵V. I. Lenin, "Left-Wing" Communism, an Infantile Disorder (New York: International Publishers, 1940) p. 11.

England, for their unreflective and undialectical enthusiasm for the Russian Revolution, and their illusion that a similar revolution was imminent in their own countries. No more polemical book has ever been written to discredit Left doctrinairism, and written by a master of the science and art of revolution:

Millions of workers in Great Britain, France and Germany are for the first time passing from a complete lack of organisation to the elementary, lowest, most simple, and (for those still thoroughly imbued with bourgeois-democratic prejudices) most easily accessible form of organisation, namely, the trade unions; yet the revolutionary, but foolish, "Left" Communists stand by, shouting "the masses, the masses!"--and refuse to work in the trade unions!! refuse on the pretext that they are "reactionary"!! and invent a brand-new immaculate little "Workers' Union," which is guiltless of bourgeois-democratic prejudices and innocent of craft or narrow-craft-union sins, and which they claim will be (will be!) a wide organization.

Greater foolishness and greater damage to the revolution than that caused by the "Left" revolutionaries cannot be imagined!²⁶

In other words, Lenin's point is that it was vain for the so-called "Lefts" in the Western countries to fence themselves off from the large masses of workers, when the wiser policy would have been full participation in such organizations as were available, regardless of their moderate character. However, the advice was not followed. We could go into greater detail in expounding this particular feature of Lenin's vision, but it is not germane to the subject of this Thesis, except as an indirect suggestion that if more Marxists had participated in moderate movements of democratic advance, the opportunity for exchange of views between religious Marxists and secular Marxists would have been enhanced, and present misunderstandings would probably have been reduced. Let us close this section by a further quotation revealing this spirit of Leninism:

The main task of the historical period through which all the advanced countries (and not only the advanced countries)

²⁶Ibid., pp. 37-38.

are now passing is to investigate, study, seek, divine, grasp that which is peculiarly national, specifically national in the concrete manner in which each country approaches the fulfillment of the single international task, the victory over opportunism and "Left" doctrinairism within the working class movement.²⁷

The Marxian critique of religion.-- This criticism has been expressed by Marx and Engels in various forms. The criticism is quite sharp, and we shall express it in several quotations to make it clear. Marx, in his criticism of Feuerbach's humanist approach to religion, stressed the social relations ignored by this type of humanism:

Feuerbach resolves the religious essence into the human. But the human essence is no abstraction in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations.

Feuerbach, who does not attempt the criticism of this real essence, is consequently compelled:

1. To abstract from the historical process and to fix the religious sentiment as something for itself and to presuppose an abstract - isolated - human individual.

2. The human essence, therefore, can with him be comprehended only as "genus," as a dumb internal generality which merely naturally unites the many individuals.

Feuerbach, consequently, does not see that the "religious sentiment" is itself a social product, and that the abstract individual whom he analyses belongs in reality to a particular form of society.²⁸

In Marx's Theses on Feuerbach, as partly quoted here, the fruitful conception that man is not an isolated phenomenon but the product of social relationships is stressed. There is no individual as such, there are social beings whose characteristics are conditioned by the many complex relationships involved in the production of the means of life. According to Marx, religion is not a human activity per se, but a reflection of social conditions of existence. Religion to him was a reflection upon the inhuman conditions under which the majority of men are compelled to work,

²⁷Ibid., p. 73.

²⁸Karl Marx, Theses on Feuerbach. Selected Works (New York: International Publishers), pp. 472-473.

and a projection from these inhuman conditions to a realm of transcendental peace and harmony. From the fatefulness of human existence to a trust in a divine providence which saves man from fate, is the religious nexus as seen by Marxists.

The assumed Marxist view of religion is usually stated as being "the opium of the people," but the disparagement and scorn implied in this statement are not quite justified when the context is examined:

Religious misery is, on one hand, the expression of actual misery, and, on the other, a protest against actual misery. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the kindliness of a heartless world, the spirit of unspiritual conditions. It is the people's opium.

The removal of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for its real happiness. The demand that it should give up illusions about its real conditions is the demand that it should give up the conditions which make illusions necessary. Criticism of religion is therefore at heart a criticism of the vale of misery for which religion is the promised vision.

Criticism has torn away the imaginary flowers with which his chains were bedecked, not in order that man should wear his chains without the comfort of illusions, but that he may throw off the chains and pluck the living flowers. Criticism of religion disillusion man so that he may think, act, and shape his reality as one who is disillusioned and come to a full understanding, so that he may move on his own axis and thus be his own sun. Religion is but the false sun which revolves around him while he is not yet fully self-aware.²⁹

While this criticism is thorough-going, it is to be admitted that the "sigh of the oppressed creature, the kindliness of a heartless world" are expressions which imply genuine appreciation of what religion has meant to millions of people living under conditions of exploitation and oppression. Yet, Marx feels certain that religion is an illusion, and students of his early years are of the opinion that he was influenced by the world-denying aspects of Lutheranism and therefore read into all reli-

²⁹Karl Marx, Introduction to a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law, as quoted by John Lewis, "Communism the Heir to Christian Tradition," Christianity and the Social Revolution (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1935), p. 491.

gion the illusions which he saw in this Protestant orthodoxy. Be that as it may, Engels also regarded religion as an illusion reflecting the capitalist economic order, and that when this order is displaced by a classless society, the reflection of this order in religion will disappear. The classic statement is:

Only then will the last extraneous force which is still reflected in religion vanish; and with it will also vanish the religious reflection itself, for the simple reason that then there will be nothing to reflect.³⁰

These statements of Marx and Engels summarize their objection to religion. It is to be noted that they are based on the typical Marxian anthropology. Man is a social being, a product of social forces, and religion is therefore a social product. The purpose of this social product is to produce an illusion from this "vale of misery." The illusion is ended when the "vale of misery" is overcome by a classless society. Misery being then presumably ended, no supernatural reflection of it is necessary, and there being nothing to reflect, religion vanishes away.

We have given at sufficient length, we trust, the various doctrines associated with Marxism, concluding with a statement of Marxism's objections to religion. In succeeding chapters we shall examine the approaches of various religious thinkers to Marxism. The questions with which we shall be occupied will largely revolve about the following inquiries:

How much of the Marxian system is accepted by each thinker?

On what basis is criticism of that part of Marxism not accepted made?

What justification remains for the religious view then

³⁰Frederick Engels, Anti-Duhring (New York: International Publishers, 1939), p. 355.

presented?

An evaluation of the religious-Marxian system thus constructed.

CHAPTER II

THE PLACE OF MARXISM IN THE THOUGHT OF FREDERICK HASTINGS SMYTH

Let us turn from the consideration of Marxism as such to the thought of a radical Anglo-Catholic scholar who has been able to include an extremely large proportion of Marxism within the confines of traditional Christian theology.

Frederick Hastings Smyth is superior of the Society of the Commonwealth composed of himself and a mere handful of laymen. Their headquarters over which he presides is the Oratory of St. Michael, 12 Putnam Avenue, Cambridge, Massachusetts. He has attempted to get a position as a professor or parish priest in the Protestant Episcopal Church, but unsuccessfully. Objections have been made to his social point of view and to his liturgical position which is too Catholic for the Protestant Episcopal Church. He has no large following among Anglo-Catholics probably due to his radical position. As a result he is feared by both Anglo-Catholics and Protestants. He belongs to the Church League for Industrial Democracy and carries on social activities with secular groups on the Left. He represents union organizations and turned his oratory over as a meeting center to the taxi cab drivers in Cambridge during their struggle. He was active in the League Against War and Fascism, and such "popular front" organizations.

Before his absorption in theological questions, he was professor of physics and chemistry at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He has made some studies on the importance of the

second law of thermodynamics for Christian eschatology, and intends to publish them. He was also associated for a time with the Smithsonian Institute for which he made excavations at Carthage.¹

The work which shows in great detail his conception of the relation of Marxism to Anglo-Catholic theology is Manhood into God.² This is the only work of Smyth on this subject. This work has been largely ignored in the religious press, except for two reviews, one by Williams Adams Brown³ and the other by Theodore Wedel.⁴ This is, however, the most thorough-going work expressing the advance of radical Anglo-Catholic groups, small though they may be, into the very body of Marxian philosophy. Father Joseph T. Fletcher, Dean of the Graduate School for Applied Religion, Cincinnati, Ohio, recommends the book as a tangible expression of this advance. To what extent Father Fletcher agrees with Smyth we do not presume to know, though we are of the opinion that the agreement is fairly substantial.

We shall now consider the various theological doctrines on which F. H. Smyth bases his approach to Marxism.

The doctrine of the Incarnation.-- The Incarnation plays a large part in the religious orientation of Catholic theology to Christian tradition. The purpose of the Incarnation is to re-establish order in a creation whose character through the fall of man is disorder. Order and disorder are significant concepts in

¹Information obtained through correspondence with Father Joseph Fletcher, Dean, Graduate School of Applied Religion, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²F. H. Smyth, Manhood into God (New York: Round Table Press, Inc., 1940).

³Christendom, VI (1941), 456-457.

⁴Anglican Theological Review, XXIII (1941), 261-263.

this theology. So significant are they that the doctrine of creation is understood as the creation of order out of chaos by the activity of God. God being all-wise and all-good, his creation was a perfect order. There is, however, disorder in creation. Whence is this disorder?

The source of disorder is in man. Man was created "in the image of God." Man's uniqueness consisted in that he was endowed with a rational intellect. Now man had the freedom of choice. He had been given enough natural grace to cooperate with God in the harmony of created order. But man chose to misdirect his own rational, ordered capacities. This event refers to the "Fall of Man." Obviously it does not refer to any definite event in history, for Smyth is sufficiently modern to accept the theory of natural evolution. The doctrine of the fall does not state at what precise point in evolution sin entered the world.

The doctrine simply states a most obvious fact, which must be independently evident to anyone, that in the midst of much surviving order there are also present in the individual and social lives of all men, conflicts, disorders, disarrays, in other words, elements of chaos.⁵

In this conception of original sin, it is already evident in what direction Smyth plans to interpret the Incarnation, for he writes of disorders, disarrays, and elements of chaos in the individual and social lives of all men. If we concentrate our attention upon social conflict and disorder, we are able to follow Smyth's interpretation of a fallen creation in terms of Marxian analysis:

In this connection it may be remarked that Karl Marx, adapting the Hegelian dialectic principle to a materialistic view of the natural world, seems to have given an astonishingly satisfying description of man, as a rational being developing historically within a fallen creation. Marx showed clearly enough how much progress has been made, and can still be made, in the matter of re-achieving and enriching a cer-

⁵Smyth, Manhood into God, p. 70.

tain order even within a disordered world. His analyses greatly illuminate the processes of human historical development. They show how human society gets split into economic class groups, and how a single class, by achieving the major control of property, at any given period of history, always tends to get the upper hand. They show how this privileged class arrogates to itself, in some sense, a position which, in a world of order, should actually belong only to all of corporate humanity, working together.⁶

If the fall of man is thus interpreted in Marxian terms, Smyth is well aware that Marxists will understand the salvation of the world in terms of their own outlook:

It follows, for a Marxist, that what Christians would call the salvation of the world, as far as its natural level is concerned, may be expected to result from the socialization of all industry, the elimination of a Capitalist class, and a consequent abundant production and untrammelled distribution of all material, as well as intellectual and aesthetic goods.⁷

Smyth agrees with the general Marxian analysis. He would also agree that the process of creating political and social order out of disorder may involve the destruction of the Capitalist system. If a Socialist or Communist order will supplant the old order for one based on cooperation, then Catholics will give their support to the new order. Smyth, however, objects to the Marxian assumption that a Communist revolution "can alone suffice for the complete restoration and the complete reperfecting of the whole of human life."⁸ This is an over-simplification due to an underestimation of the difficulties of the problem of the world's redemption. It is an over-simplification because the world rejected the Man who began the Process of the Incarnation. A rejection which involves the Crucifixion of the Son of God reveals a depth of disorder much greater than can be cured by a mere social revolution.

The Marxist view of man, therefore, overestimates his creative capacity in believing that he can bring order out of

⁶Ibid., p. 82.

⁷Ibid., p. 83.

⁸Ibid., p. 84.

present disorder without divine assistance. At the same time, paradoxically, the Marxian view of man underestimates the highest potentialities of human nature which demand fulfillment in a process of redemption "which leads him beyond even a reperfected natural creation, beyond all time and space, into eternity, and ultimately, to union with God."⁹

It is significant, however, that this grave shortcoming of Marxian theory from the point of view of Smyth's theology, does not necessitate any separation of Catholics from Marxists in practical political activity. This separation is not necessary because Marxism represents for Smyth a correct sociology, though an incomplete theology. But the implications for social life in Catholic theology can only be fulfilled through associations with Marxists:

Nevertheless, Marxists do great service to Catholics in reminding them that a very great deal not only can, but must still be accomplished within our fallen order, and furthermore, that it is only upon this basis, by beginning to work for the re-perfection of the world on the natural level, that man can hope to be restored to his true end above and beyond it. For man cannot leap the gulf which now separates him from God, caught as he is in a disorder of his own causing, unless a bridge of order be built, re-created out of the materials of that same disordered creation in which he now resides. Just how this bridge is eventually to be built is another matter which we shall presently discuss. In the last analysis, this must, of course, involve man's redemption, not by himself, but by God. Nevertheless, in much of that preliminary work which must be accomplished in this world, as a foundation for the redemption process, it would seem that there may be discovered an extensive common ground upon which both Catholics and Marxists might meet and work together.¹⁰

When Smyth describes his conception of the Process of the Incarnation, it is significant that he uses as much materialist terminology as he possibly can at the same time retaining the traditional formulations of Catholic dogma. By Catholic, he does not mean the ecclesiastical doctrines and regulations of the Roman Catholic Church but rather the essential theological and

⁹Ibid., p. 85.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 85-86.

creedal formulations of the Church before the Protestant Reformation. In uniting Catholic tradition with aspects of materialistic philosophy, he prepares for himself an avenue into Marxian materialism:

The Incarnation is initiated by the action of the Divine Logos, first of all, through the taking of physical matter into Himself. He forms about Himself, as the organ of His Self-expression within creation, a human body. This body was taken from the flesh and blood of a human mother, a Jewish maiden named Mary, living in Nazareth of Galilee, two thousand years ago. It is very significant that God initiates His process of re-ordering the world, on the level of what we call matter. The Process of the Incarnation, that is, of re-creation of the world, begins logically, as did the first creation, within the material world. Only later does this Process extend itself into the levels of mind and spirit. Thus, the Catholic Religion, as the Religion of the Incarnation, is, in a sense, rooted in a proper and thorough-going materialism; for the method of the Incarnation demonstrates to us that the necessary prerequisite foundation for all intellectual and spiritual order is, so far as this world is concerned, the development of an organized material body.¹¹

It is clear that the idea of process here has much in common with the idea of process as used by Marxists to describe transformations in nature. Moreover, Smyth like the Marxists looks upon matter as the foundation for all intellectual and spiritual order.

In this Process of the Incarnation the Wisdom of God organizes itself into the mind of the man Jesus. Our Lord, to use Smyth's terminology, was an intensely social person, moving among the multitudes and concerning himself with the problems of large numbers of people. Human social relationships were therefore appropriated and redeemed from the disorder of the fallen world. The Process of the Incarnation continues to perform the same work in our world through the activity of the Divine Logos. In fact, Smyth now calls it "the social Organism of the Incarnation"¹² involving a twofold activity on the part of Catholics. They must

¹¹Ibid., pp. 108-109.

¹²Ibid., p. 120.

place themselves at the complete disposal of "Our Lord" so as to become instruments in the activity of the social organism of the Incarnation. Also, they should not hesitate to cooperate, in every possible manner with secular forces which have a part to play in that Divine re-ordering of the world which is understood in the Incarnation Process. In social terms, this re-ordering of the world means "more cooperative human living, or whatever proposals for world economic reorganization would seem to hold out hope of making wars less probable."¹³ Smyth then refers to the possibility of collaboration with those secular forces which are of a Socialist or Communist nature. He is very forthright in stating his views:

A good many secular leaders believe very sincerely that a Communist economy, with the ownership of our industrial means of production removed from private ownership and restored to the entire community, would greatly improve the material and general cultural welfare of the masses of mankind. If this is true--and there are cogent arguments for believing it--the Communist plan, at least in its economic aspect, is one which should enlist the sympathy of Catholics. It is a plan which would tend toward the improvement of the soil of our world.¹⁴

Smyth does not give those cogent reasons which have brought him to this position of collaboration with Communists. He assumes that their activity will produce the results implied in the Incarnation Process. More, he accuses Catholics of being themselves responsible for the identification of Christianity with social reaction.

To such Our Lord may well be found saying, if we may venture to give His ancient words to the Jews a modern cast: "The Communists and secular humanists go into the Kingdom of God before you."¹⁵

The approach of this radical Anglo-Catholic thinker to social problems is therefore first, an acceptance of the whole Marxian system in socio-economic terms and goals. Second, an in-

¹³Ibid., p. 121.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 122.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 123.

terpretation of the Incarnation in social terms in such a way that the reordering of the fallen world includes the activities of Marxists. As has been pointed out, Marxists are over-optimistic in their attitude toward the perfectibility of human nature and rule out the need for a transcendental agency. This transcendental agency, in the form of the Incarnation Process, does not consider itself ruled out, however, for it includes those very Socialists and Communists in its reordering of a world characterized by oppression, injustice and wars into one reflecting cooperation and mutuality.

The Sacramental Doctrine and its social meaning.-- The second approach to Marxism, besides that described in the section preceding, is derived from the social meaning given the sacraments of the Anglo-Catholic Mass. It is necessary, however, to relate the sacrament of the Eucharist to the Process of the Incarnation. It will be recalled that according to Smyth "Our Lord" initiated the Process of the Incarnation by reordering the disorderly elements of the fallen world. "Our Lord" in his perfect human nature had completely reordered these elements, yet they were still conditioned by the contingency of the Man Jesus, appearing in a particular human environment at a certain definite time in history. Our Lord's true humanity was therefore adequately represented by the Man Jesus. We must not forget, however, that Our Lord, in Smyth's Anglo-Catholic theology, was also perfect God, since the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Eternal Logos, was in him. The reordering of the broken elements of the fallen world by Our Lord's perfect humanity is only part of the total Incarnation Process. The ordered perfection achieved by Our Lord in his human nature, in order to complete the Process, must be taken into the final consummation, that is, into the very Order

of the Divine Nature.

The ordered perfection of Our Lord's human nature was such that this could be taken "further on," conveyed as it were, into the Order of the Divine Nature too. This means that everything which He, out of His world of time and space, out of fleeting history and out of disordered and finite human contexts, re-created into what was necessarily, as we have now seen, the individual, the contingent and the mortal perfection of the order of His human nature, was, at the same time, taken beyond the Man Jesus, conveyed beyond time and space, beyond contingency, beyond mortality and finiteness, to the level of the Absolute, the Universal, the Timeless and the Eternal, into His Divine Nature, into the Being of God Himself.¹⁶

This process of transformation into the Divine Being of God and involving two stages is current in Anglo-Catholic theology. The first stage involves the transition from a disordered and fallen humanity to a perfected humanity in the Man Jesus. The second stage involves the transition of the perfected but still contingent humanity of Jesus into the very Nature of God, beyond time and place, in other words, beyond all contingency of an existential world. This is indeed the Transubstantiation of Our Lord's perfect humanity into the Divine Substance of God's being.¹⁷

Now the connection between the Process of the Incarnation and the Catholic Sacramental system lies precisely in the fact that the twofold process represented in Our Lord Himself is made available to all sinners through the Eucharist. In this sacrament the members of Our Lord's continuing social humanity, bring to him in their relationship as members of the Church, offerings of bread and wine. These offerings stand as objective material representations of the human beings who prepared them. They are, furthermore, objective representations of men's achievements in the partial re-ordering of a fallen world. The bread sums up the whole of our social and economic lives. Similarly for the wine.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 192-193.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 194.

In them are elements of the total efforts of men and women in sustaining themselves in a disordered world. These elements are offered to Our Lord under the covenant made in the Last Supper. He takes them as additional elements into His humanity, and they become part of that twofold re-creative process to which we referred as the Process of the Incarnation. When the bread and wine are the best that we can possibly offer under condition of our liability to sin, He perfects these still disordered gifts by virtue of His own perfected humanity on the level of nature. The second stage of the Incarnation Process, called by Smyth the Atonement, then becomes operative. Our Lord takes these gifts of ours, which are material embodiments of our lives, into the Absolute perfection of His Risen and Ascended Being:

The substances of the created bread and wine, that is, the substances of our human lives perfected into His humanity, and offered under the form of bread and wine, are transubstantiated into the Substances of His Body and Blood, united to Him in the Uncreated Godhead--just as His individual, contingent and mortal humanity was long ago taken into an Absolute, Universal and Eternal Perfection.¹⁸

According to Smyth, this twofold process of redemption, in which our lives are taken up into the very center of the Divine Godhead is effected every time the Holy Sacrifice is celebrated upon a Catholic altar. It is not merely a repetition, it is a continuing process, an unveiling in time of the Process of the Incarnation which itself belongs to Eternity. Furthermore, through the sacrifice of the Eucharist, men receive periodically for recurring tasks in the disordered world immediate reinforcements of their "original, human, Divinely bestowed endowment of free, creative power."¹⁹ It is needless to point out the immaterial note in this understanding of creative power. It is part of man's original endowment though Divinely bestowed.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 207.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 213.

There remains to show the connection between this particular statement of Anglo-Catholic doctrine with an awareness of social facts interpreted by Marxian theories. We seem to be millions of miles away from Marxism when discussing the Eucharist. According to Smyth, however, the relationship is very close. It is found precisely in the social meaning to be given to the bread and wine. Just what do they represent as offerings of our lives comprehending the whole of our social relationships? Smyth gives the answer to this crucial question as follows:

Whence is this bread? we must always ask, and whence this wine? Was the wheat sown and reaped by men and women who live free, secure and happy lives in the countrysides of the world? Was the flour ground in mills and carried on trains or ships by workmen who live under conditions of a maximum social justice? Did the workmen who handled it receive a wage which corresponds to the utmost which is possible when considered in relation to the ascertained maximum capacity of our lands and our available technical means? Were all the men and women involved free to live lives for which they can in any full sense be considered responsible and accountable in the sight of Our Lord? Or are they even now forced into evil patterns of action in the world, with their individual wills unnecessarily overruled by an economic system which needs only Christian analysis and correlative action to correct?²⁰

It is evident that the bread and wine, in Smyth's eyes, are tainted because of their production under the conditioning influence of the present economic order. It is the duty of Catholics to present bread and wine with as little taint as possible derived from the contingency of a fallen world. But this can only be done through a vast social transformation. Oddly enough, we are thus able to proceed in one step from the Eucharist to the social revolution! This is the way Smyth puts it:

For such bread and wine as we can now obtain within our present economic system can be placed by Catholics upon their Altars only under conditions of firm resolution to eliminate within the world those intolerable disorders which, so long as our present economic system is permitted to endure, must unavoidably continue to enter into their preparation. And

²⁰Ibid., p. 218.

this resolution must be taken no matter what the immediate consequences within a disordered world environment, no matter what the danger of great dislocations in economic and political systems, no matter that our resolution may lead us, through the savage resistance of an unredeemed world, on and up the slopes of Calvary and to the Cross.²¹

Smyth is quite aware that this supernatural formulation of the doctrine of the sacrament, in spite of its social meaning, will not be acceptable to Communists:

In today's world we are faced by Dialectical Materialists and other secularizing Humanists who deny the reality of any supernatural level of being of which we have been speaking. These men and women would therefore deny the real existence of anything which can be described in terms of the Absolute and Eternal. For them, all reality is comprised in what Catholics call the natural, created and fallen world.²²

Again, Smyth does not allow this fundamental philosophical disagreement to prevent him from giving due recognition to Communists:

Catholics may well regard Communists thankfully, as perfecting a new bread and wine; but at the same time they must deprecate the fact that Communists continue to insist that these gifts have to be kept solely on the natural level. It is for Catholics to arouse themselves to the glaring fact that much perfecting of natural bread and wine needs to be done. Probably, also, it is for them to cooperate with Communists in this task. But in addition, they must humbly and graciously seek to show that Communist bread and wine, while far from being offerings which need to be summarily rejected, are nevertheless not final ends in themselves. They must be brought, for their true and ultimate salvation, further on--into the body of Our Lord's social humanity, and thence, through the Sacrifice of the Altar, into His Risen Life.²³

Again we observe the very close connection between sacramental doctrine and Communist programs of action symbolized under the rather odd name of "Communist bread and wine"! One may be excused in making the suggestion that Smyth's hope of bringing Communists to accept his presentation of the meaning of the Eucharist is wishful thinking.

It is to be noted, however, that for Marxist Anglo-Catholic theologians and thinkers, sacramental doctrine offers a

²¹Ibid., p. 220. ²²Ibid., pp. 227-228.

²³Ibid., pp. 236-237.

very fruitful avenue to participation in social reconstruction and radical criticism of laissez-faire capitalism. This is indeed Dr. Fletcher's opinion:

The submission of Christianity to the new economic forces, ethical and systematic, was undoubtedly due in large measure to the controlling influences of economic interests. There is that much bearing on the question of the materialist point of view. But the explanation of Protestantism's readier submission, both in time and degree, is to be discovered, fundamentally, in its essential individualism and in its rejection of a sacramental principle which never admits of any final separation between spiritual and material things. A view of the pathway to God and grace as spiritually alone and independent led naturally to the false self-sufficiency of laissez-faire.²⁴

Just what Dr. Fletcher means by "a sacramental principle which never admits of any final separation between spiritual and material things" is difficult to say. He probably means that matter and spirit are inextricably connected in reality and are never finally separated. He rejects thereby a spiritual world separated from the material world. But does he reject a spiritual world, or God, before creation, that is before the existence of the material world, and after the material world has been taken up into the Divine Nature of God through the completion of the Process of the Incarnation? Though we have discussed these questions with Dr. Fletcher, we do not know the complete answer to them. But we do know that with Dr. Fletcher the interpretation of sacramentalism is even more direct than that of Smyth, in its relation to Marxism. In the case of Smyth, the Eucharist is so interpreted as to include Communist efforts for justice, though finding fault with them for denying a transcendental Eucharistic philosophy. In the case of Fletcher, the Eucharist is interpreted so as to symbolize that inseparable unity of

²⁴Joseph F. Fletcher, "Religion and Capitalism in History," Christendom - A Journal of Christian Sociology, June, 1934, p. 142. Italics mine.

thought and being implied by some dialectical materialists. For instance, note how Fletcher's thought approaches that of Julius F. Hecker, a well-known exponent of Marxian philosophy:

The Dialectical Materialist accepts both quantity and quality or extension and mind, as the attributes of ultimate reality. Thought and being are not quantitative differentiations of the same substance; they are intrinsically different though always in inseparable unity. Nature is thus potentially endowed with the attribute of spirit, which merges into consciousness in the process of development.²⁵

There is undoubtedly a close relationship between Hecker's understanding of dialectical materialism and Fletcher's understanding of sacramental doctrine. Since Dr. Fletcher has not developed this interpretation in writing, we merely pose the question as one of great significance in the approach made by Leftist Anglo-Catholics to Marxian philosophy. This interpretation requires much clarification, elucidation, and precise definition, and since this has not yet been done to our knowledge by Dr. Fletcher, we obviously cannot comment upon it.

The Incarnation and the world's violence.--- We have described, we trust impartially, in previous sections the manner in which Smyth interpreted the Process of the Incarnation to include the re-ordering of the fallen world through the agency of radical social forces, Socialist and Communist. Smyth follows this interpretation with the further symbolism of the Cross. To him, the Cross is a method used by Our Lord to meet the world's counter-attack when He initiated the Process of the Incarnation. He thus opened the way of the Cross to succeeding members of His Incarnation. It is therefore a method to be used by all those who, in union with Him, wish to implement that Process in history, and particularly in the area of social relations. Just as the Cross

²⁵Julius F. Hecker, "Christianity and Communism," Christianity and the Social Revolution (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1935), p. 325.

represents the violence of the world against Our Lord, so does the Cross for modern Catholics of Smyth's persuasion represent the violence of the world against the Incarnation in its economic aspects. The Cross is no meek submission technique for Smyth. It is a symbol of Divine Violence:

To participate in the Cross, Catholics both as individuals and as a Church must first goad the world into a fury by the revolutionary threat of the Incarnation--and by this threat alone.²⁶

This is certainly a very exacting demand to place upon Catholics. Smyth is quite aware that they have done no such thing. He knows that the Church has accumulated wealth and power for a purpose quite different from the revolutionary redemption of the world. Smyth here accuses the Church in terms strongly suggestive of the radical Protestant criticism of absolutization:

She forgets that the Church Militant is not the Kingdom of God already realized, but is, instead, always the Kingdom-in-the-making. The Church is that region of the Kingdom visible in earth, which is in process of re-creating the disorders of fallen creation. In so far as the Church has confused this region of process with an actualized Kingdom, she has committed what Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr calls the "Catholic Heresy." She has confused a means with an end, and a growing with a maturity. . . . She has tried to surround herself with a wall of wealth and power.²⁷

The Church must therefore speedily choose between experiencing a divine punishment at the hands of the best elements in the secular world and choosing the way of the Cross by defying the world's violence in revolutionary activity. Should the Church choose this latter way, Smyth is of the opinion that ninety per cent of her nominal membership will drop away, and her endowments will also drop away. But in this latter revolutionary way will be "Catholic force in action. This will be Christian violence. This will be militant Christianity."²⁸

²⁶Smyth, Manhood into God, p. 430.

²⁷Ibid., p. 437. ²⁸Ibid., p. 438.

Such Catholic action will be undertaken for the purpose of building a redeemed social order. Smyth, in considering the economic and social structure of such a redeemed order frankly states that a Communist order is attractive from a Catholic point of view. He is a through-going Marxist in believing that the private ownership of the means of wealth production is the chief obstacle in preventing democratic control of economic life. Since a Communist society overthrows this kind of ownership, Smyth is all for it. What about the serious question of dictatorship in the Soviet Union? Smyth seems to explain this away:

We may entertain a good hope that undemocratic faults, if they exist in Russia, are there as accidents, rather than as properties of Communism. There is nothing in the nature of a Communist economy itself which necessarily makes for either violence or dictatorship. On the contrary, peace and the widest possible democracy are not only its avowed purposes, but, in the hands of people of goodwill, its very real possibilities. Therefore, if some so-called "Communism" is seen to be repressive and undemocratic, it means either that this particular experiment has failed, or that it has not yet reached its complete goal.²⁹

This is certainly a forthright endorsement of the Soviet Union, and it seems to be characteristic of the most extreme Leftists among Anglo-Catholics, of which Smyth is necessarily one. Is there not here a little of the old fallacy: "the king can do no wrong."? It is interesting to note that in his discussion of the structure of the redeemed social order, he emphasizes hierarchical levels to minister to the various capacities of men and women. At the top will be Theologian-Philosophers who, because of their understanding of Christian revelation, of the will of God, and of the requirements of the Good Life, will by common consent be accepted as enunciating the guiding principles of the social order.

Smyth is much more optimistic than dialectical theologians

²⁹Ibid., p. 459.

in evaluating the possibilities of its reaching perfection. He writes of the "reperfection of our social order on the natural level" which serves "as a foundation for the reperfection of man within it."³⁰ It is necessary to recall, however, that in Smyth's theology, the Process of the Incarnation has two levels, a natural and a supernatural, and that the whole process of transubstantiation, as interpreted by him, means the passage from a disordered humanity to a perfect humanity in "Our Lord," and the further passage from this perfect humanity into the very Divine Being of God. The same transition is applied to the reperfected social order, which is the Earthly Kingdom of God. The Earthly Kingdom according to the familiar ritual of the Eucharist is again taken into "Our Lord's Ascended Life."³¹ The natural virtues of wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice may, by the grace of God, be matured among men in such a social order. Upon the Altar of Christian Sacrifice, they are transubstantiated into their supernatural counterparts. "The substance of natural Wisdom is ever transubstantiated into the Substance of Divine Faith."³²

Thus is completed in Smyth's opinion the vast transformation of human nature implied by the phrase in the Athanasian Creed from which he has derived the title of his book:

"Who although He be God and man: yet He is not two, but is one Christ; One, however, not by conversion of Godhead into flesh; but by taking manhood into God."³³

Critical evaluation of the Smyth religio-Marxist system.--

Two observations clearly stand out as a result of this summary of Smyth's views. One is that he is informed throughout by classical Catholic doctrine, with a strong emphasis on the Athanasian Creed,

³⁰Ibid., p. 490. ³¹Ibid.,

³²Ibid., pp. 490-491. ³³Ibid., title page.

and the usual natural-supernatural system of Catholic theology. Needless to say, he does not mean Roman Catholic doctrine; but rather his interpretation of Christian doctrine in the Catholic tradition of Athanasius and the Council of Trent, ignoring to some extent the Augustinian-Calvinistic-Lutheran tradition. We have not attempted to criticize Smyth's interpretation, merely recording it impartially for the sake of an objective description of his views. Smyth has been challenged by Theodore Wedel for representing social sin as merely disorder when corruption in Wedel's view is the more accurate description. The accusation seems to be just since the foregoing pages show abundantly the fact that Smyth's Incarnation Process is conceived throughout in terms of reordering the disordered elements of the world. Furthermore, man's rational capacities are emphasized throughout, and little place is given to Augustine's contribution to a psychology of will. Yet this criticism was given a vigorous reply by Dr. Joseph F. Fletcher on the assumption that Wedel's review implied a danger of defeatism about man and history:

An interesting example of this danger is seen in Theodore Wedel's review of Smyth's Manhood into God (Anglican Theological Review, July, 1941). Smyth attempts a syncretism of socialism for the future and classical Catholic doctrine. Wedel first rejects socialism without giving the reader his reasons for doing so, which is not very helpful. But more significant is his comment on Smyth's belief that man can achieve a better and more workable social order (not a utopia!). He calls it an "acceptance of Nature before Grace" and calmly says, "I hunger for at least a touch of Calvinism." Boldly he suggests that human virtue is impossible without the forgiveness of sin and its effects through grace. Here again we have the idea that history is hopeless unless and until all men are "converted."

On the one hand, Smyth regards personal and social sin and failure as disorder. On the other hand, Wedel regards personal and social sin as corruption. Hence, Smyth regards the Incarnation as a Process, the theosis of history which is practically more significant than the Atonement. Wedel regards the Incarnation as an Event, and quotes Bishop (Mandell) Creighton to the effect that the prominence given the doctrine of the Incarnation "weakens the sense of sin"! One religious outlook, mind-set, is involved in the human struggle. The other is somehow superior to it. One is instrumen-

tal. The other is judgmental.³⁴

The disagreement as to Smyth's interpretation of Christian doctrine seems to resolve itself, in Dr. Fletcher's opinion, into a disagreement between mind-sets, instrumental and judgmental.

The second observation which inevitably follows from a study of Smyth's approach to Marxism, is that it is not merely an approach, but a full absorption of Marxian doctrines even to the extent of accepting a social revolution as the way out of the impasse of laissez-faire capitalism, and even to the extent of accepting a Communist social order as the foundation for the Incarnation. The reasons why he does so are not given. These wide agreements with Marxian doctrine in an extreme form are merely given as such. His work would have been more fruitful if he had taken pains to reply to the usual objections of a thorough-going Communist interpretation of Marxism. As it stands, it will be unconvincing to many, even to those in sympathy with radical social philosophy. Furthermore, there is no way in which a Communist interpretation can be derived from the orthodox Catholic creeds. In view of the wide difference of opinion which exists as to their interpretation, for instance of the Catholic hierarchy versus Smyth himself, it would seem that the connection of Catholic doctrine with Marxian tactics and philosophy exists only in the minds of radical Anglo-Catholics of the type of Smyth. The connection as he states it is much too rigorous and unyielding. Had he written that the Process of the Incarnation had this social meaning for him though not necessarily for others, his work would have been read with more sympathy. It may be that Anglo-Catholics

³⁴Joseph F. Fletcher, "A Theological Note: On Religious Cynicism," Anglican Theological Review, XXIV (January, 1942), 75-76.

will find it of value in aligning themselves with the forces which make for a radical transformation of the world. But radical Protestants and liberals will exercise caution in reading it, caution in two directions, namely, the meaning of Catholic doctrine, and the meaning of Marxism as given by Smyth.

CHAPTER III

THE PLACE OF MARXISM IN THE THOUGHT OF ANDRÉ PHILIP

At present André Philip is one of the leading figures in the French Committee of National Liberation. He has held important positions in both the religious and the labor fields in France. He was Professor of Law at the University of Lyons and president of the French Federation of Christian Socialists. In the Popular Front government led by M. Léon Blum, André Philip was a member of the Finance Committee in charge of public works. He has published a number of works dealing with the social and economic conditions not only of France but also of the United States, especially as influenced by the process known as rationalization. He was for a time editor and frequent contributor to the French magazine Le Christianisme Social, and also a frequent contributor to Le Semeur. In 1936 he gave the Burgh Memorial Lecture in London.

André Philip had much opportunity while in France not only to observe but also to cooperate with Marxist groups. But quite unlike F. H. Smyth's wholesale acceptance of Marxism, André Philip's approach to Marxism is qualified to a large degree under the influence of Henri de Man. Henri de Man, before becoming a Nazi collaborationist, was a militant leader of the Parti Ouvrier Belge, a parliamentary party corresponding to the British Labor Party in principles and objectives. Furthermore he played a large part, for good or ill, in modifying the theoretical formulation of Belgian, and possibly European socialism, through his

work Au dela du Marxisme. This book was, however, highly technical in character, and in order to make it available to less sophisticated groups, it was summarized by André Philip in Henri de Man et la Crise Doctrinale du Socialisme.¹ It is to be noted that while the British and American labor movements have been influenced to some degree by ethical conceptions derived from Christianity, it was not so on the Continent, for there the labor parties were influenced by some variant of Marxism, revised or orthodox.

Though this work is a summary of de Man's larger volume, we may take it that it represents quite faithfully the views of de Man, for Philip sent the galley proofs of his work to de Man for correction before publication.

The book begins with a chapter on "Socialism et Rationalisation" which is a study of the complexity of economic, technical, and even psychological changes which have come as a result of the "new capitalism." The labor movement was befuddled in its attitude to new-capitalism, the Marxists remaining loyal to their old doctrines, and the more moderate elements giving it unstinted praise.

The new capitalism is best characterized by the process of rationalization. This involves three things: a method by which to study industrial problems of large-scale production; second, the results achieved by this method; third, a romantic appreciation of the role of the capitalist in large scale production. The business of socialism, Philip says, is to approve the method, to study and criticize its use, and to condemn the romantic exaltation of the business man.

¹André Philip, Henri de Man et la Crise Doctrinale du Socialisme (Paris: Librairie Universitaire J. Gamber, 1928), 197 pp.

The new capitalism is characterized by concentration of industry manifested in huge monopolies such as the steel trusts, the world-wide-petroleum corporations, the potassium trusts, the chemical dye trusts. It is interesting to note that up to this point Philip is quite in agreement with such an orthodox Marxist as Lenin:

The enormous development of industry and the extremely rapid concentration of production in ever larger enterprises constitute one of the most characteristic peculiarities of capitalism.²

From this point on, however, Philip proceeds to conclusions which imply an important modification of the idea of the class struggle in Marxism. There are a number of reasons for this. In the first place, Philip is in agreement with the orthodox Marxist in a condemnation of the huge profits made by monopoly capitalism, but he differs in the sense in which these profits are made not merely by the exploitation of labor but by charging the general consumer an exorbitant price. It is idle to speak of the exploitation of the worker since his income increased ten and even twenty per cent before the depression of 1929. In the second place, the consumer who is paying through the nose must be taken into account in any modern analysis of monopoly capitalism. Hence Philip's notion of the working class and class struggle is considerably modified from that of Karl Marx, and he concludes:

Surtout, il faut désormais reconnaître que la notion marxiste de l'intérêt de classe a fait son temps. On ne saurait plus aujourd'hui, sans s'exposer au triple danger du corporatisme, du nationalisme et du conservatisme, identifier l'idéal socialiste avec l'intérêt de la classe ouvrière, ne fut-ce qu'à cause du caractère vague et imprécis de la notion de classe tant que l'on reste sur le seul terrain économique.³

²Nikolai Lenin, Imperialism: The Last Stage of Capitalism (The Vanguard Press, New York, 1929; first published 1917), p. 5.

³Philip, Henri de Man et la Crise Doctrinale du Socialisme, pp. 41-42.

The vague connotation of the term working class is due to the fact that it is not clear whether the expression refers to manual workers merely, or all to those who take part in the productive process except for the few non-working capitalists. At all events, Philip reinterprets the doctrine of the class struggle to mean the struggle of the entire community (collectivite entiere) against capitalism in the name of the democratic ideal of equality of rights.

In view of the fact that the whole community is involved in the struggle and not merely the working class, Philip is of the opinion that socialism has a further task to carry out besides its usual economic task. This is the opposition of a spiritual idealism to bourgeois materialism:

Enfin, au matérialisme bourgeois, égoïste et jouisseur, qui met au premier plan des préoccupations humaines l'accumulation des richesses, il doit opposer un réalisme spiritualiste qui affirme l'éminente dignité et la valeur sacrée de la personnalité humaine. C'est au nom du respect de la personnalité, du droit de tout homme à se réaliser intégralement et à "trouver son âme," que le socialisme combat pour l'émancipation ouvrière.⁴

This spiritual conception of the dignity of man is indeed very much like that of Channing Unitarianism. It is only fair to add that a number of years later, Philip, under the influence of Karl Barth, modified his religious views, especially with regard to human nature and the source of its dignity. We shall return to this aspect of Philip's thought later.

Up to this point, we have merely discussed the opening chapter of Philip's introduction to de Man's criticisms of Marxism. These we shall now consider:

Criticism of the Marxian conception of the class struggle.-- In this chapter, de Man speaking through Philip, calls in

⁴Ibid., p. 48.

question not merely this or that doctrine of Marx, but the whole system of historical materialism, which forms the central part of Marxism. Marxism involves an antagonism between workers and capitalists, which becomes conscious in the form of the class struggle. Technical development renders this antagonism sharper and sharper until the very development of society itself determines the triumph of the working class over capitalism. It is true that Philip quotes the correction introduced by Engels and that we have mentioned above.⁵ Philip, however, is not satisfied with this explanation, for though Marx does not deny the influence of human will, he regards this influence as predetermined by economic laws:

Marx ne nie pas l'influence de la volonté humaine sur l'infrastructure économique, mais il considère cette volonté comme prédéterminée: il ne se représente pas l'accomplissement du socialisme comme la réalisation immédiate de la catégorie évolution économique dans la catégorie évolution sociale, mais il croit que, pour déterminer l'avenir, les lois de l'évolution économique n'ont besoin que de passer à l'état de connaissance.⁶

This leads to the fundamental criticism of Marxism. Are economic categories necessarily translatable into mental categories? Is it correct to affirm that the transformation of social tendencies into tendencies of the human will is a simple process of adaptation? Philip concludes that it is not, and he raises the following objections to this apparently deterministic theory. In the first place, this strict determinism provides no adequate explanation for the appearance of the theoreticians of Marxism, such as Marx and Engels themselves, for in their case Marxian theory was not the result of their own class interest, but was rather the outcome of the richness of an intellectual culture

⁵See Footnote No. 13 page 15.

⁶Philip, Henri de Man et la Crise Doctrinale du Socialisme, p. 62.

with rootage in bourgeois and aristocratic sources.⁷ Hence Marx and Engels in their quality as bourgeois intellectuals refused to adapt themselves to their social milieu, a fact which disproves their theories.

In the second place, when the history of craft unions is investigated, it is observed that these unions were among the first to be organized, while the workers in large industries lagged behind. Were economic interest the sole determinating motive, this would not be so. Therefore Philip concludes that socialism and working-class solidarity are not the result of a simple adaptation of proletarians to their class situation, but rather a refusal of such an adaptation in the name of a superior ideal.

In the third place, Marxism implies on the part of the working man simple self-interest. But this is a much too elementary psychology, for the motivations are much more complicated, and ethical factors neglected by Marxism play their part.

In the fourth place, the formula of adaptation of the working man to his economic situation is incorrect for there is just as often a reaction against this very situation. Hence, there is also a reaction which tends to modify the situation so as to adapt it to certain human objectives. It is precisely to this reaction that the socialist movement owes its existence. And this reaction implies that the economic order does not determine man's activities, but that man is already characterized by a native psychology which antedates that order. Hence psychological causes must be investigated for a proper understanding of the meaning of the socialist movement.

Criticism of the feeling of exploitation.-- All working-

⁷Ibid., p. 63.

class revolt is based on a feeling of exploitation and a feeling of oppression. But this feeling of oppression presupposes a tension between the working man's needs and satisfactions. And this tension is based on the conviction that conditions should not be so and that all human beings have an equal right to certain satisfactions. This ideal of equality is itself the motivating power of socialist movements, and of Marx himself:

Cet ideal d'égalité est en fait le mobile essentiel des mouvements de masse à caractère socialiste, et, si l'on regarde d'un peu près, c'est également celui de Marx lui-même; malgré ses efforts, en effet, pour rester l'observateur impassible de l'évolution économique, Marx, dans maints passages du Capital, laisse libre cours à son indignation, critique, attaque, condamne, en un mot porte des jugements de valeur qui reposent tous sur l'hypothèse d'un idéal égalitaire.⁸

This ideal of equality, according to Philip, is derived from sources which are much more ancient than the class struggle. It is the fundamental ideal of Christianity:

. . . . le sentiment chrétien reste l'une des sources les plus fécondes des convictions démocratiques et socialistes. . . . Considéré sous cet angle, le mouvement socialiste est à la fois le défenseur de la démocratie, que la bourgeoisie a désertée, et le réalisateur de l'idéal chrétien, que l'Eglise a trahi.⁹

Criticism of the feeling of oppression.-- The sentiment of exploitation is itself derived from the sentiment of oppression. This oppressive feeling is due to the fact that the working man is no longer able to produce, as did the Medieval artisan, things for the pure joy of producing them. The question posed is: How can a human being find happiness not merely by work, but also through work?¹⁰ This is a tremendously important question psychologically, for work is a means of expressing one's personality. Unfortunately, in the capitalist economy, it is not pleasure in doing one's work that is the motivating factor, but fear,

⁸Ibid., pp. 79-80.

⁹Ibid., p. 85.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 87.

fear of unemployment, fear of being given the sack. The question for socialism is to find a new motivation. Marxism, according to Philip, has a naive answer in the conception that the new motivation to animate the working masses will be derived from a new objective, such as defense of the revolution or the interests of the community. But Philip is of the opinion that this will be true only of a few dozens or hundreds of militant revolutionaries for whom a rational ideal is sufficient to generate new habits of work. The "ideal working man" of Marxism, who has "nothing to lose but his chains" has no longer the proper ethical and sociological background to give his utmost devotion to the community. In order for the working man to recover his sense of vocation and joy in his work, an organization of enterprises on a democratic basis is necessary. It is not clear precisely what Philip means by this phrase. He mentions it in connection with the syndicalist movement, and it would seem to indicate not ownership of industry by society, but control of the conditions of labor by labor itself within industry.

Criticism of Marxism from the standpoint of the evolution of the working class movement.-- During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the evolution of the socialist movement has been characterized, according to Philip, by the following three fundamental facts.¹¹

1. A gradual transition from cosmopolitanism to patriotism.
2. The substitution of reformism for the older revolutionary ideal.
3. A growing tendency of the masses towards "embourgeoisement."

¹¹Ibid., pp. 103-104.

In 1848 Marx ended the Communist Manifesto with the clarion call: "Workers of all countries, unite." But at the time of Philip's writing (1928) it seemed to have been changed to "Workers of our country, get rich." The reasons for this change in thought are many, but increasing salaries ever since 1880, and the growth of national prosperity led the workingman to associate himself much more closely with the interests of his own nation than with the international interests of the working class. The reason is, in Philip's view, the fact that national sentiment rests on a tangible experience of national destiny. The socialist movement in Europe has therefore become the supporter of the nation-state, and is closely allied to its destinies, rather than the instigator of a cosmopolitanism denuded of all sentiment of nationality. Modern socialism must therefore correct this error in Marxism by stressing the psychological value of national sentiment, and by affirming above national interests, a superior ideal of universal love. In order to realize this ideal, however, nations like individuals must be prepared to sacrifice their special interests. A working class movement solely led by economic motivations would align itself more and more with nationalist policies. To obviate this disaster the socialist movement must replace notions of Marxian self-interest by Christian ideals of fraternity and sacrifice.¹²

The change in socialist objective from cosmopolitanism to nationalism is matched by the change from expectation of a catastrophic revolution to plain reformism. Philip truly compares the idea of revolution with the Christian eschatological hope.¹³

There is a profound psychological reason, however, for the transformation from revolutionary policies to reformist policies. Ac-

¹²Ibid., p. 116. ¹³Ibid., p. 118.

tivity requiring long effort transforms gradually the subconscious psychological motivations of the individuals concerned in it. The pure revolutionary goal requires social and political power for its realization. But the process of organizing this political power results in a change of motivation from the ultimate purpose of reaching the goal to the purpose of maintaining the means whereby to reach the goal. The ultimate end becomes an illusion, and the only reality is the concern to maintain the means which are assumed to lead to the end purposed.

This psychological transformation is manifested in the socialist movement by the growth of organizations, such as trade-unions, socialist parties, syndicates. This growth of power brings the socialist movement more and more in contact with the bourgeoisie:

Chaque avance nouvelle, chaque acquisition nouvelle de puissance du mouvement ouvrier crée de nouvelles surfaces de contact par lesquelles s'accomplit davantage l'adaptation aux règles idéologiques du milieu bourgeois ¹⁴

This "embourgeoisement" is possible especially when working class motivations are economic in character, for with an expanding economy, economic desires of the working class are in large measure satisfied. But "disinterested sentiments" like the sense of the true, the good, the beautiful, cannot be satisfied. Hence spiritual considerations are the proper methods of avoiding submergence in the bourgeoisie:

Ce n'est que dans la mesure où les revendications ouvrières s'inspire de considérations éthiques et juridiques, que le mobile révolutionnaire, antibourgeois, qui a animé les débuts du mouvement socialiste se trouve renforcé au lieu d'être assouvi par chaque amélioration nouvelle du sort de la classe ouvrière.¹⁵

Criticism of proletarian culture.-- Defenders of proletarian culture take as their starting point the assumption that

¹⁴Ibid., p. 125. ¹⁵Ibid., p. 131.

for the working man, law, morality and religion are so many bourgeois prejudices behind which hide bourgeois interests.¹⁶ The corollary of this assumption is the emergence of proletarian cultural values of an ethical and aesthetic character quite distinct from bourgeois values. Yet, upon objective examination of the facts, Philip discovers that the proletariat, far from being the creator of a new culture, merely reflects the worst aspects of bourgeois culture. The working man approaching the standards of living of the petty bourgeoisie absorbs blindly and uncritically the latter's elementary notions of culture, such as his tastes for sentimental novels, sensational moving picture, capitalist press, and popular art. In view of this fact the pretensions of proletarians to a new culture are not well founded, precisely because culture does not spring from the masses but from a cultural and spiritual elite, disciplining its life according to an ideal. The function of socialism is not therefore to create a new culture, but merely to create for the masses material conditions preparatory to all culture:

La fonction propre du mouvement ouvrier n'est pas de fonder une civilisation nouvelle, mais de créer pour les masses certaines conditions matérielles préalables à toute civilisation, y compris la civilisation socialiste à venir.¹⁷

Andre Philip's transition to Christian realism.-- At the time when Andre Philip summarized Henri de Man's criticisms of Marxism, it would seem that he had adopted de Man's essential correction of Marxian doctrines. This essential reorientation of socialism away from revolutionary emphases to Christian ideals is clearly stated:

Le socialisme n'est autre chose que la condamnation de la moralite régnante au nom de la morale absolut ou encore, si l'on n'a pas peur des mots, la condamnation du capitalisme au nom du christianisme.¹⁸

¹⁶Ibid., p. 134. ¹⁷Ibid., p. 154. ¹⁸Ibid., p. 142.

Christianity was then interpreted by Philip as a system of psychological and ethical values oriented to the essential dignity of man, very much, it would seem, after the pattern of liberal religion in the 1920's. In the 1930's, however, and especially after his discussions and conferences with Karl Barth, Philip changed his Christian orientation to a more favorable appreciation of what may be roughly called dialectical theology or Christian realism. The chief ingredient of the Christian faith is the sovereignty of God, which demands opposition to lesser sovereignties such as state socialism, Fascism (black or red), and "communism which does not exist in Russia today."¹⁹ It is therefore sin to regard any act as perfect or final. It is sin to regard the socialist state as the Kingdom of God. The Church must declare against all sovereignties but the sovereignty of God. The character of atheism is precisely the identification of God with any human system, for such identification negates the transcendental character of God. While the older liberalism was closely related to an ethical moralism which judged severely proletarian classes, Philip now looks upon such ethical moralism as a kind of spiritual capitalism, like possessing God. While summarizing de Man's book, Philip was impressed by de Man's rejection of revolution for pacifist convictions. Now, however, he regards a policy of non-violence as irresponsible. It is an optimistic belief underestimating the power of sin in the world.²⁰

Concomitant with Philip's orientation to Christian realism may be observed a warmer appreciation of Marxism. Possibly this is due to his closer association with communist groups in the

¹⁹Eduard F. Ouelette, "Andre Philip: Christian Statesman," Christianity and Society, Autumn, 1942, p. 13.

²⁰"Christianity and Peace," Protestant Digest, June, 1939, p. 25. A translation by J. L. Adams of Chapter 1 of Le Christianisme et la Paix, Paris, 1933.

Popular Front movement in which he took such an active part. He does not hesitate to say that the Popular Front includes not only workmen but also bosses, farmers, small merchants, technicians, teachers. And this in a sense is a vindication of Marxism, for the role of the working class is not denied since these middle-class elements are now allied to it. "We are all workingmen now."²¹ In fact, the Christian must be a Marxist, for Marxism is the philosophy of suffering socialism. The Christian must preach Christianity to French socialists, but he must also preach socialism to Christians. But the Christianity that fires Philip with fervor now is not the older liberalism with its over-optimistic doctrine of man, but a new Realism based on much older traditional conceptions:

Democracy is the system which puts in the first place neither the State, nor the nation, nor society, but this human personality, which by nature is not a very great thing, but is the thing for which Christ died on the Cross.²²

Critical evaluation of Philip's approach to Marxism.--

It is clear that Philip's later conversion to Christian realism is in itself a partial refutation of his orientation to de Man's views. Nevertheless, it may be instructive to re-examine briefly the criticisms of Marxism implied by de Man and for a time at least accepted by Philip.

First, as to the determinism implied in Marxism. This is a current bourgeois misconception, and it may be partly excused on the ground that vulgar Marxists themselves have given it some currency. Marxism involves an interaction of both economic and non-economic factors, and never intends to negate the latter. That this has been done by Marxists instructed only in the rudi-

²¹Ouelette, Christianity and Society, Autumn, 1942, p. 15.

²²Ibid., p. 17.

ments of their philosophy is no serious disparagement of Marxism itself. A sound correction of this misconception of Marxism is given by the Anglo-Catholic scholar, Father Joseph Fletcher:

In our own time the characteristic religious repudiation of "economic determinism" as a method of historical interpretation is frequently explained on the ground that it is a "doctrine" of Marxism. So to describe it makes it "materialistic" and therefore both wicked and false! As a matter of fact Marxian theoreticians for more than fifty years have been trying to explain to the "muddle-class" that the materialist formula does not ignore the importance of non-economic influences. Somehow the bourgeois intellect can grasp the concept of materialism (although it usually perverts it into an ethical and gross idea) but it finds "dialectic" too much to digest. This popular misunderstanding led even Karl Marx before his death to say, "I am no Marxist!" Engels wrote, "If therefore somebody twists this (materialistic view of history) into a statement that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms it into a meaningless, abstract and absurd phrase."

The truth is, of course, that Marxists have always attached importance to ideological influence in history. The mere fact that these influences are traced to economic factors, and a dialectical relationship is revealed, does not rob either the one or the other of its separate existence! However, it is something of a warning to all doctrinaires, whether religious or secular, to see how this bourgeois principle has manifested itself as an over-simplification, like an iron in its soul, in the Third International itself.²³

As to de Man's accusation that Marxism repudiates ethical factors for class interests, one may reply that much of the literature of Marxism breathes with an intense ethical dynamic. In order to dispel this uninformed accusation, we shall give a number of quotations from the writings of Marx so that his ethical will may become evident:

What a spectacle! On the one hand, the infinitely ramified division of society into the most varied races, which confront each other with small antipathies, bad consciences, and brutal mediocrity, and precisely because of the ambiguous and suspicious positions which they occupy towards each other, such positions being devoid of all real distinctions although coupled with various formalities, are treated by their lords as existences on sufferance. And even more. The fact that they are ruled, governed, and owned they must acknowledge and confess as a favour of heaven! On the other hand, there are those rulers themselves whose greatness is in inverse propor-

²³Joseph T. Fletcher, "The Faith of our Founding Fathers," Radical Religion, IV (Spring, 1939), 16.

tion to their number.²⁴

Even in his criticism of religion, Marx set forth an ethical evaluation of man:

The criticism of religion ends with the doctrine that man is the supreme being for mankind, and therefore with the categorical imperative to overthrow all conditions in which man is a degraded, servile, neglected, contemptible being, conditions which cannot be better described than by the exclamation, of a Frenchman on the occasion of a projected dog tax: "Poor dogs; they want to treat you like men!"²⁵

And even though the following quotation might be regarded as a eulogy of force, it still breathes the same ethical dynamic:

But in Germany every class lacks not only the consistency, the keenness, the courage, the ruthlessness, which might stamp it as the negative representative of society. It lacks equally that breadth of soul which would identify it, if only momentarily, with the popular soul, that quality of genius which animates material power until it becomes political power, that revolutionary boldness which hurls at the opponent the defiant words: I am nothing, and I have to be everything.²⁶

Again,

Great natural beauties, the picturesque rags of the English poor, and the shrivelled flesh of the women, ravaged by work and poverty; children lying in dirt; and the stunted creatures produced by overwork in the one-sided processes of the factories! And the most charming last details of practice: prostitution, murder and the gallows.²⁷

Howard Selsam, a proponent of Marxian philosophy, has also recently added his own contribution to the ethical implications of Marxism:

Marxism, which has been so often accused of seeking to eliminate moral considerations from human life and history, emphasizes rather the moral issues involved in every situation. It does so, however, not by standing on a false platform of absolute right, but by identifying itself with the real needs and interests of the workers and farmers, the middle classes, professionals, the Negro people, the exploited peoples of the colonies and the socialist citizens of the Soviet Union. It stands, in short, on the platform of "the whole of advanced and progressive humanity" and believes

²⁴Karl Marx, Selected Essays, trans. H. J. Stenning (London: Leonard Parsons, 1926), p. 23.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 26-27.

²⁶Ibid., p. 34.

²⁷Ibid., p. 106.

that in doing so its position above accords with the highest morality. Rather than repudiating, Marxist socialism embraces and gives new meaning to the great moral utterances of the prophets, sages and philosophers of the past. Its single moral aim is to bring to fruition the desire that men may live abundantly.²⁸

All of these quotations express the tremendous dynamic ethical will implied by Marxism. It is true, however, that they are not given with equal overt expression in all the Marxian classics, and the undisciplined reader may easily reach the assumption that ethical factors are omitted.

Another consideration to be kept in mind is that Marx and Engels were fighting a battle against utopian moralists much as Philip in his later stage was criticizing "Christian moralism." As we shall see later in Reinhold Niebuhr's approach, there are religious emphases in Marxism which are much more profound than the facile liberalism of de Man. It is interesting to note that the whole burden of de Man's criticism involves a reorientation of socialism from Marxism to Christian idealism. And it is even more interesting to note that the main emphasis of Niebuhr's Moral Man and Immoral Society is precisely the reverse process, a reorientation of Christian idealism to Marxism! Hence this book of Niebuhr is the most thorough refutation of de Man's Au dela du Marxisme. Note Niebuhr's criticism of liberal religion's fixation with the spirit of love:

The weakness of the spirit of love in solving larger and more complex problems becomes increasingly apparent as one proceeds from ordinary relations between individuals to the life of social groups. If nations and other social groups find it difficult to approximate the principles of justice, as we have previously noted, they are naturally even less capable of achieving the principle of love, which demands more than justice. The demand of religious moralists that nations subject themselves to "the law of Christ" is an unrealistic demand, and the hope that they will do so is a

²⁸Howard Selsam, Socialism and Ethics (Toronto: Progress Books, n. d.), p. 13.

sentimental one.²⁹

Niebuhr later criticizes de Man for the latter's too facile rejection of the romantic hopes of proletarians:

Henry deMan, another evolutionary socialist, rather misses the point when he declares: "The idolisation of the ideal which is characteristic of sentimentalists and romanticists, is repugnant to me. Those who promise collective happiness in some remote future seem to me to be naive when they are honest, and detestable when they are humbugs." Sentimentality and romanticism is the disease of observers who dream of an ideal goal without seeking its achievement. The true proletarian who nerves himself for heroic action by believing both in the purity of his goal and in the possibility of its achievement is no doubt touched with sentimentality and romanticism, but he is something more than a sentimentalist. He is both more dangerous and more vital than the sentimentalist. He is a fanatic. . . . The absolutist and fanatic is no doubt dangerous: but he is also necessary.³⁰

Again Henri de Man makes much of the transition of the socialist movement from cosmopolitanism to patriotism, and from revolutionary policies to reformism. The charge is a little ironic simply because de Man, as a revisionist, has been one of the chief instigators of this transition. Contrary to his opinion, such an "embourgeoisement" of socialism does not constitute a refutation of Marxism, but can be explained in terms of Marxism. Here again, Niebuhr is forthright:

Russian communists of pure water pour their scorn upon European socialists, among whom patriotism outweighed class loyalty in the World War. But there is a very simple explanation for the nationalism of European socialists. They were not as completely, or at least not as obviously, disinherited as their Russian comrades.³¹

Again,

The cynical estimate of the democratic state carries with it a similar estimate of nationalism and patriotism. The true proletarian is completely bereft of patriotic loyalty. He stands outside of the whole system of sentiments and loyalties which give cohesive power to the nation. Here again, communist theory, or orthodox Marxism, is not merely an academic anti-nationalist theory. It conforms to the experience

²⁹Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932), p. 74.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 221-222. ³¹Ibid., p. 12.

of the real proletarian, the truly disinherited worker, who is defrauded not only of the physical but of the cultural benefits which the nation bestows upon its more favored citizens. So powerful is the sentiment of patriotism, that if the injustice, from which the worker suffers, is not quite unbearable and if some minimum portion of the national cultural inheritance is bequeathed to him, he will respond to the appeals of the nation, though more reluctantly than the middle classes Whenever a nation does not completely disinherit its workers, it has been able to count upon their loyalty.³²

The oscillation of the working class between international class loyalty and national sentiment is therefore a measure of the extent to which it is disinherited--a vindication of Marxism. And even when the working class is denuded of any economic security and aligns itself with revolutionary parties, it does not thereby submerge its national orientation in a vague and amorphous cosmopolitan culture as implied by de Man. However much one may disagree with Lenin's interpretation of Marxism, he recognized national differences even in the ultimate revolutionary situation:

As long as national and state differences exist among peoples and countries--and these differences will continue to exist for a very long time even after the dictatorship of the proletariat has been established on a world scale--the unity of international tactics of the Communist working class movement of all countries demands, not the elimination of variety, not the abolition of national differences (that is a foolish dream at the present moment), but such an application of the fundamental principles of Communism (Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat) as will correctly modify these principles in certain particulars, correctly adapt and apply them to national and national-state differences.³²

In conclusion, it would seem apparent that in so far as André Philip was influenced by de Man's criticism of Marxism in 1928, he absorbed de Man's interpretation of Marxism at the hands of naive and vulgar Marxists. Marxism is a more many-sided and richer doctrine than its revisionists have assumed. In so far as André Philip changed his orientation from liberalism to Christian

³¹Ibid., p. 150.

³²V. I. Lenin, "Left-Wing" Communism, an Infantile Disorder (New York: International Publishers, 1940), p. 73.

realism, he became convinced of the Marxian criticism of Christian moralism as an ideology, and of the legitimate objectives and methods of struggle of the working class in the French Popular Front. He then regarded Marxism as the philosophy of suffering socialism, that is the philosophy of socialist movements enduring various forms of suppression and compelled to react against such oppression by a self-assertion of their interests rather than by reliance on methods of persuasion based on purely moralistic categories.

In this later approach of Philip to Marxism, there are undoubtedly still valuable criticisms of Marxian philosophy. These criticisms are informed by the dialectical theology of Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich, and shall be given in more detailed form in subsequent chapters.

Suffice it to say that revisionism, including that of de Man, has had a very unsavory history. In an attempt to go beyond Marxism for a more perfect ordering of society, the revisionist usually falls prey to forces he had incorrectly evaluated. Nor can we refrain from a certain measure of contempt for de Man who, under the guise of the most elevated ethical and spiritual phrases, attempted a criticism of Marxism only to change his spots and assume the form of a Nazi collaborationist! A more perfect example of the perversions that may arise when man transcends himself cannot be imagined!

CHAPTER IV

THE PLACE OF MARXISM IN THE THOUGHT OF REINHOLD NIEBUHR

Reinhold Niebuhr needs little introduction to American readers. Professor of Christian ethics in Union Theological Seminary, he has fascinated and provoked the religious world by his scintillating works both in the field of social analysis and theology. The publication of Moral Man and Immoral Society and Reflections on the Ends of an Era indicated his abandonment of liberal Christianity for a realistic view containing large ingredients of Marxism. Later, with the publication of his Gifford lectures, The Nature and Destiny of Man, his appreciation of Marxism was integrated within a theological pattern informed by the insights of the Christian tradition stemming from Augustinian and Reformation sources. Whether or not the reader agrees with Niebuhr's theology, (and the writer has many misgivings concerning it), it cannot be denied that in Niebuhr we have a seminal mind able to weld into his own peculiar synthesis many elements of man's spiritual heritage, be they Christian, Hellenic, Hebraic, or even Marxist. Niebuhr is also well-known for his numerous articles in The Nation, being probably the only American theologian able to secure through this journal an alert audience eager to profit by his realistic interpretation of national and international events.

His approach to Marxism, particularly from the point of view of Marxism's rejection of ethical and rational ideologies, is one of the most significant in America today. It is to this

approach, as well as to his critical evaluation of utopian elements in Marxism, that we shall devote the present chapter.

Criticism of the ideologies of moralism and rationalism.--

In Moral Man and Immoral Society,¹ Niebuhr approaches the question of social living in face of the pervasive presence and influence of power groups which prevent complete sociality. Ethical and rational resources have usually been held sufficient to overcome the disproportions of social power, or the adjustment of conflicts. But these resources constitute a vain hope in view of the intractabilities of power groups:

Only a few sociologists seem to have learned that an adjustment of a social conflict, caused by the disproportion of power in society, will hardly result in justice so long as the disproportion of power remains.²

Modern industrial civilization is characterized by the presence of power groups who derive their power from their control of raw materials. The imperialistic ambitions of these power groups play a decisive role in modern wars:

The need of the industrial overlord for raw materials and markets, and rivalry over control of the undeveloped and unexploited portions of the earth are the occasion of modern wars. . . . The will-to-live becomes the will-to-power. Only rarely does nature provide armors of defense which cannot be transmuted into instruments of aggression. The will-to-power of competing national groups is the cause of the international anarchy which the moral sense of mankind has thus far vainly striven to overcome.³

If the moral sense of mankind has failed to attenuate or prevent conflict, so has human reason. Rationalists are too prone to assume that reason has the power to limit human conflicts. Rather it is reason which is limited:

Men will never be wholly reasonable, and the proportion of reason to impulse becomes increasingly negative when we proceed from the life of individuals to that of social groups,

¹Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932).

²Ibid., p. xvii.

³Ibid., p. 18.

among whom a common mind and purpose is always more or less inchoate and transitory, and who depend therefore upon a common impulse to bind them together.⁴

Reason may be valuable, to be sure, in achieving a unity of impulse organized about the will-to-power or the acquisitive instinct, but utterly powerless to achieve a unity between conflicting wills-to-power. Religious resources fail equally to overcome social conflicts, especially when they are derived from asceticism or mysticism. But what about the religious emphasis on love as the highest virtue? The difficulty is that love is most active when the vividness of the need prompts those whose imagination is weak; love, however, is baffled by the more intricate social relations. If justice is difficult of achievement in international relations, how much more ridiculous is the demand that nations submit to "the law of Christ" which is presumed to be the law of love:

The demand of religious moralists that nations subject themselves to "the law of Christ" is an unrealistic demand, and the hope that they will do so is a sentimental one.⁵

The ideal of love is particularly obnoxious to the disinherited precisely because it has been assumed by liberal Protestantism, which is the religion of the privileged classes. It is true there is a religious element in the construction of a better society, but the full force of religious faith will never be available for the building of a just society, simply because the highest visions of religion are realized in sensitive individual consciences which do not conquer society.⁶

The conclusion to which Niebuhr arrives in the opening chapters of Moral Man and Immoral Society is that the conflicts of social life due to will-to-power are not mitigated or resolved by resources drawn from reason, conscience, or the ideal of love.

⁴Ibid., p. 35.

⁵Ibid., p. 75.

⁶Ibid., p. 81

In other words, though Niebuhr does not use the term, these resources are in fact ideologies in the sense discussed in Chapter II on pages 17, 18, and 19. It was necessary for Niebuhr to discuss these ideologies before coming to grips with a thorough-going Marxian interpretation of class conflict.

Class conflict and its possible justification for the achievement of justice.-- Niebuhr approaches very close to a Marxian interpretation of class relationships when he states that the chief difference in power groups lies between those who own property and those who do not. Furthermore, in modern society there is a kind of power which is peculiarly significant:

In modern capitalistic society the significant social power is the power which inheres in the ownership of the means of production; and it is that power which is able to arrogate special social privilege to itself.⁷

Not only do dominant classes possess power derived from special privilege. They do not without struggle yield this power to other classes very easily since they wish to preserve their eminence and superiority in society. Privileged classes rationalize their possession of power under the various excuses of thrift, risk, the just returns of profit, the need of leisure to develop culture. Needless to say, Niebuhr is not impressed by these specious reasons, for injustices remain uncorrected. Is there not here a ground of agreement with those among proletarians who have relinquished the hope of justice through persuasive processes?

It must be taken for granted therefore that the injustices in society, which arise from class privileges, will not be abolished purely by moral suasion. That is a conviction at which the proletarian class, which suffers most from social injustice, has finally arrived after centuries of disappointed hopes.⁸

This is precisely the Marxian interpretation. Though he

⁷Ibid., p. 81.

⁸Ibid., p. 141.

holds that the latter may be criticized, Niebuhr is of the opinion that it does have a large measure of validity:

. . . . it is a fact that Marxian socialism is a true enough interpretation of what the industrial worker feels about society and history, to have become the accepted social and political philosophy of all self-conscious and politically intelligent industrial workers.⁹

Niebuhr then gives expression to the materialist conception of history in much the same quotations that are presented in Chapter II. Though it is the creed and prophecy of Marx, Lenin, and Trotsky, it is to be admitted it is not necessarily the creed of the masses of workers. Yet, where the workers have been most oppressed, they have usually accepted an unadulterated Marxism rather than any of its revisionist forms:

The difference between Marx and those who have revised his creed in the direction of a greater optimism is not an academic one. It is literally the difference between the less favored and the more favored workers, between those from whose perspective modern capitalism is really hopeless, and those whose slightly more favorable experiences encourage a more hopeful view.¹⁰

Which view will finally triumph is a question which history itself will decide. Niebuhr passes a favorable judgment on even the Marxian theory of the state. There is indeed a very remarkable understanding of Marxism in Niebuhr which bursts through almost on every page of his book. The true evaluation of the problem involved of achieving justice and the necessary political program, is a special virtue of the proletarian:

Only the Marxian proletarian has seen this problem with perfect clarity. If he makes mistakes in choosing the means of accomplishing his ends, he has made no mistake either in stating the rational goal toward which society must move, the goal of equal justice, or in understanding the economic foundations of justice. If his cynicism in the choice of means is at times the basis of his undoing, his realism in implementing ethical ideals with political and economic methods is the reason for his social significance.¹¹

⁹Ibid., p. 144. ¹⁰Ibid., p. 147.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 164-165.

But this implementation in the mind of the dispossessed proletarians has usually involved the use of violence against the holders of entrenched power. Violence has usually been rejected on ethical and religious grounds, yet Niebuhr has just cast grave doubts upon the possibility that ethical and religious considerations will alone be effective in overcoming these entrenched groups. There is really little distinction between violence used by governments and violence used by revolutionaries:

If a season of violence can establish a just social system and can create the possibilities of its preservation, there is no purely ethical ground upon which violence and revolution can be ruled out. This could be done only upon the basis of purely anarchistic ethical and political pre-suppositions. Once we have made the fateful concession of ethics to politics, and accepted coercion as a necessary instrument of social cohesion, we can make no absolute distinction between non-violent and violent types of coercion or between coercion used by governments and that which is used by revolutionaries.¹²

While the use of coercion by governments or revolutionaries is repugnant to man's ethical sense, there is no question that each decade produces greater social tensions which may result in further wars on a large scale. It is significant to note that in 1932, at the time when he wrote Moral Man and Immoral Society, Niebuhr was of the opinion that another war would produce enough chaos to make some sort of revolution possible in states whose authority would be sufficiently shattered. He believed that the Orient would move towards communism whereas the Occident would become semi-socialistic:

The world may become divided between a communistic orient and a semi-socialistic occident, moving slowly towards the socialist goal, but always running the danger of moving too slowly to avert another catastrophe.¹³

It will be extremely interesting to observe the nature of developments in the post-war world to determine how far they con-

¹²Ibid., p. 179. ¹³Ibid., p. 191.

firm Niebuhr's formula. It may very well be that his prophecy will be close to the truth.

It seems clear that Niebuhr adopts in large measure, though not in principle, the theory of the class struggle, and also that of the state as an instrument dominated by that class having control of the means of wealth production. Equally clear is his belief that even at the cost of violence the proletarians may achieve a rough justice superior to present social injustice. Niebuhr, however, raises serious objections to the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat, (a theory which was traced to its original source in Marx, and especially in Lenin, in Chapter II). The theory of communism is that this dictatorship is a transitory state which will disappear once the new regime has become accepted by the whole community. This view betrays a rather facile optimism unfortified by a more robust apprehension of human nature:

This theory fails to do justice to the facts of human nature, revealed not only in the men of power but in ordinary men. If the Russian oligarchy strips itself of its own power, it will be the first oligarchy of history to do so. It cannot, of course, transmit its power by inheritance; but the inheritance of power is not the only cause of its abuse or basis of its perpetuation. . . . Since, according to the tenets of communism, the dictatorship is necessary until all the enemies of the proletarian state are "liquidated," and since external enemies will remain for many decades or centuries, even if all internal enemies should be destroyed, the power of dictatorship could be perpetuated indefinitely without any conscious dishonesties.¹⁴

There is, according to Niebuhr, a definite romanticism in communist theory at this point. Lenin turns sentimentalist when envisaging the possibilities of tomorrow.¹⁵ Communist theoreticians like Lenin and Bukharin predict perfect mutuality between the individual will and the social will. This prediction is nothing but a Rousseauistic element in communist thought. There can never be a perfect mutuality of interests between indi-

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 193-194.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 194.

viduals who perform different functions in society, because, for one thing, man's imagination will lead him to enlarge his needs beyond the minimum requirements but his selfishness will make him feel the pressure of his needs much more than those of others. The present policy of inequality of rewards in the Soviet Union, if it does not result in inequality of social power, does result in unequal social prestige.¹⁶ Communist absolutism Niebuhr finds extremely dangerous:

Absolutism, in both religious and political idealism, is a splendid incentive to heroic action, but a dangerous guide in immediate and concrete situations. In religion it permits absurdities and in politics cruelties, which fail to achieve justifying consequences because the inertia of human nature remains a nemesis to the absolute ideal. Individuals may aspire to the absolute with more justification and less peril than societies. If the price which they must pay is high, the probable futility of their effort involves only their own losses. And the sense of a noble tragedy may compensate for the defeat. But societies risk the welfare of millions when they gamble for the attainment of the absolute. And, since coercion is an invariable instrument of their policy, absolutism transmutes this instrument into unbearable tyrannies and cruelties. The fanaticism which in the individual may appear in the guise of a harmless or pathetic vagary, when expressed in political policy, shuts the gates of mercy on mankind.¹⁷

Nevertheless, Niebuhr does not allow this criticism of communist utopianism to blind him to the valid critiques of communist movements against parliamentarism:

Communism is bound to become a force in modern society, as certainly as modern society disinherits a portion of its community completely. Perhaps that fact ought to be welcomed. Perhaps communism will furnish the criticism which will save parliamentary socialism from complete opportunism and futility.¹⁸

Niebuhr has much to say about the revisionism of parliamentary socialism, their transition to bourgeois policies, and he cites a rather large number of renegades from the socialist movement. The fact that he does so is another indication of his appreciation of Marxian socialism. So great is his appreciation

¹⁶Ibid., p. 198.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 199.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 223.

that he does give it a measure of moral justification:

The conclusion which has been forced upon us again and again in these pages is that equality, or to be a little more qualified, that equal justice is the most rational ultimate objective for society. If this conclusion is correct, a social conflict which aims at greater equality has a moral justification which must be denied to efforts which aim at the perpetuation of privilege. A war for the emancipation of a nation, a race or a class is thus placed in a different moral category from the use of power for the perpetuation of imperial rule or class dominance.¹⁹

The religious element in Marxism.-- While in the previous chapter, it was stated that de Man, as interpreted by André Philip, perceived little religious emphasis in Marxism, we find that Niebuhr does find such an emphasis. The struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, a struggle involving the snatching of victory from defeat, is typical of classical religion. This is a religious interpretation of proletarian destiny, and in this interpretation of the human drama more than in his economic doctrines one may find the real Marx.²⁰ When Marxism speaks of a science of history, it does not really inform itself by a science but by an apocalyptic vision similar in intensity and direction to the apocalyptic visions of the early Christians:

In the eschatology of the true Christian, virtue will ultimately triumph by the power of its own strength, or by the strength supplied by God's grace. In the eschatology of the true Marxian, justice will be established because weakness will be made strong through economic forces operating with inexorable logic in human history. The Marxian imagines that he has a philosophy or even a science of history. What he has is really an apocalyptic vision. A confident prophecy of the future is never more than that. In him political hopes achieve religious proportions by overleaping the bounds of rationally verifiable possibilities, just as, in the soul of the true Christian, moral hopes achieve religious verification.²¹

¹⁹Ibid., p. 234. For fuller details on the problem of coercion, see Paul Brown Henniges, "A study of the Religious Social Ethics of Reinhold Niebuhr with particular attention to the Problem of Violence," B.D. dissertation, Meadville Theological School, 1943.

²⁰Ibid., p. 154.

²¹Ibid., pp. 155-156.

That Niebuhr has here truly rendered the apocalyptic vision implicit in Marxism, may be appreciated by a direct quotation from Marx expressing this very vision:

In the formation of a class in radical chains, a class which finds itself in bourgeois society, but which is not of it, an order which shall break up all orders, a sphere which possesses a universal character by virtue of its universal suffering, which lays claim to no special right, because no particular wrong but wrong in general is committed upon it, which can no longer invoke a historical title, but only a human title, which stands not in a one-sided antagonism to the consequences, but in a many-sided antagonism to the assumptions of the German community, a sphere finally which cannot emancipate itself without emancipating all the other spheres of society, which represents in a word the complete loss of mankind, and can therefore only redeem itself through the complete redemption of mankind. The dissolution of society reduced to a special order is the proletariat.²²

Niebuhr is of the opinion that there is something both sublime and ridiculous in expecting either the meek or the weak to inherit the earth. The sublimity lies in the fact that both Christians and Marxists expect the realisation of the absolute. There is this difference, however, in the sense that classical religion places the realisation of the pure ideal in a trans-historical realm rather than in history. In subsequent discussions of this religious aspect of Marxism, Niebuhr has found it guilty of being mingled with irreligious elements:

Communism is a religion in as far as it has a mythology which insists that human life and history have meaning. In the same sense the irreligious naturalism of bourgeois culture is religious. In both cases it is assumed that a scientific analysis of the course of history gives a valid picture of a sustained purpose and meaning in the confusion of incidents and events which comprise history. In both cases it is denied that this purpose has a conscious author or that there is any revelation of his intent in anything but the facts of history themselves.²³

Here Niebuhr links Marxian naturalism with bourgeois

²²Karl Marx, Selected Essays, trans. H. J. Stenning. (London: Leonard Parsons, 1926), p. 37.

²³Reinhold Niebuhr, Reflections on the End of an Era (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), p. 193.

naturalism and condemns both for denying the author of history while accepting the meaning which this author has manifested in history. A full-orbed religion believes that the meaning and purpose of history transcends any immediate event or fact of historical reality. A dualism is here implied, and since this appellation is usually denied by those who follow partly or wholly the position of Niebuhr, we cannot do better than quote directly from Niebuhr in support of this dualism:

The real difference between naturalistic monism and dualistic supernaturalism is derived from ethical feeling. If it is recognized or believed that the moral imagination conceives ideals for life which history in any immediate or even in any conceivable form is unable to realize, a dualistic world-view will emerge. Thus classical religion with its various types of dualism grows out of the conflict of spirit and impulse in human life. . . . A particularly pathetic aspect of this conflict in the human soul is that the very self-consciousness which makes moral criticism of natural impulse possible also endows egoistic impulse with particularly stubborn force.²⁴

Niebuhr's criticisms of Marxism.-- The preceding sections have already given indications of Niebuhr's criticisms of certain aspects of Marxian theory. Needless to say, Niebuhr is convinced of the powerful case of the proletarians against the bourgeoisie, and, as we have indicated, is prepared to support this case even to the point of violence. But he is equally apprehensive as to the dangerous over-beliefs of Marxians. In the first place, he casts grave doubt as to the withering away of the state as a definite historical possibility, for the reason that entrenched power-groups do not relinquish their power. In the second place, he is aware of the inadequately religious character of communism in the sense in which it denies the transcendental character of the meanings which it finds in history. In the third place, he claims that the Marxian sense of mission to create a new world-

²⁴Ibid., pp. 198-199.

order becomes a demonic pretension. It is a demonic pretension for a number of reasons. Marxian fanaticism by neglecting the cultural inheritance of the middle classes throws the latter into the arms of the industrial oligarchs. Social forces of the Western world, underestimated by communism, may have more power of resistance than was offered by the old Russian regime, and in this way, Marxian fanaticism may provoke bloody civil wars which may bring in their train a return to barbarism:

There is little possibility that pure Marxism can become the centre of a new culture and the organising principle of a new society in the Western world. It is more probable that its religious pretensions will prevent the Western world from achieving a workable and stable system of social ownership for some decades to come.²⁵

The more demonic aspects of Marxism are partly the result of the failure of Christianity to develop an adequate political ethic, and partly the result of that peculiar human weakness which Marxians share with all human beings. This human weakness which brings about a demonic pretension in Marxism is the claim that finite men can take the place of God:

Unqualified pretensions by, or on behalf of, the workers are the revelations of a common human weakness as well as the consequence of the sins of the privileged. What gives all human life its tragic character is that finite men are always usurping the place of God, i.e., the centre of the meaning of existence. If the workers of the modern world commit this religious pretension, they are not the first, but the last of all social classes to do it. They are not committing a new, but a very old, human sin. It will be more justly judged by the whole community if it is recognised that it is a sin which the potent class of the hour shares, on the one hand, with all humanity, and to which it has been driven, on the other, by the religious pretensions of its enemies.²⁶

The over-optimistic pretensions of Marxism are due, in Niebuhr's opinion, to its inadequate doctrine of man:

²⁵Reinhold Niebuhr, "Christian Politics and Communist Religion," Christianity and the Social Revolution, ed. by John Lewis, Karl Polanyi, and Donald K. Kitchin (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1935), p. 469.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 471-472.

Within the limits of its philosophy it cannot conceive of the real freedom and transcendence of the human spirit. It introduces sufficient inconsistency into its social theory to give a fairly true picture of historical events, falsified only to the degree in which it uses mechanical concepts to comprehend the paradox of historical freedom and historical destiny. But in its view of man's nature, it is forced to deny the depth of spirit in the structure of human personality. It is consequently unable to understand the real character of human evil. The greed of the dominant bourgeoisie, which symbolizes the principle of evil in Marxist theory, is obviously something more than organized hunger. The possessive impulse is itself more spiritual than physical; and it is obviously only the tool for the lust of power in many instances. But Marxism has no understanding of the will-to-power. That is why it can hope for a complete social harmony as soon as the physical needs of all men are equally satisfied--and can construct a new society in Russia in which the will-to-power of a new oligarchy expresses itself without social restraint and with tragic fury.²⁷

In his latest work, Human Destiny, Niebuhr has sharpened his criticism of Marxian utopian hopes by offering a direct refutation of Lenin:

Every interpretation of human history which has some understanding of the transcendent norm of historical ethics is inclined to fall into the error of regarding the transcendent norm as a simple possibility. This error runs through the thought of most sectarian versions of Christianity and through the secularized forms of Christianity in the Renaissance and Enlightenment. It is an error to which American liberal Protestantism has been particularly prone because sectarian and secular perfectionism have been compounded in this form in the Christian faith. Marxist apocalypticism also shares this error The Marxist vision of this perfection in which all rules of justice are transcended, is vividly expressed by Lenin: "Every right," he declares, "is an application of the same measure to different people who are not the same and not equal to each other. This is why 'equal right,' is really a violation of equality and an injustice. . . . Different peoples are not alike. One is strong and another weak. One is married and another is not. . . . The first phase of communism can therefore still not produce justice and equality. Unjust differences in wealth will still exist; but the unjust exploitation of man by man will become impossible. . . . Immediately upon attainment of formal equality for all members of society . . . there will inevitably arise before humanity the question of going still further from formal equality to real equality, i.e., to realizing the rule: 'From each according to his ability and to each according to his need.'"

. . . . The Marxist finds such a vision plausible because

²⁷Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, I Human Nature (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), pp. 47-48.

he imagines that sinful egoism is derived merely from the class organization of society.²⁸

Let us take these criticisms one by one.

We may agree with Niebuhr in his assertion concerning the over-optimistic belief of the communist leaders as to the withering away of the state. Power-groups show a peculiar tendency to entrench themselves, and there is no special reason why this tendency should not be present in the leaders of the Soviet Union. To what degree it is present, and the precise extent of the perversions it may produce remains to be decided by future history.

As to the partly irreligious character of Marxian philosophy because it denies the transcendental reference, it is no doubt true that Marxism formally denies such a transcendental reference, claiming for itself a naturalistic standpoint. Whether such a formal denial is a grievous shortcoming in Marxian philosophy will depend upon the standpoint of the reader. Opinions different from Niebuhr's have been expressed on the subject, and though they do not nullify Niebuhr's criticism, they nevertheless throw a fresh light on such a religious orientation as is implied in Marxism. Kenneth Leslie in a recent editorial in The Protestant expresses a point of view different from Niebuhr's with regard to the value of such religion as remains in the Soviet Union:

Now as long as religionists teach a magical approach to nature they cannot very well be welcome in the Soviet Union. And it goes without saying that political churches must of course be excluded. To admit them would be to commit suicide. But religion as an orientation towards life and towards human beings is not only taught in the USSR but is taught for the first time in history by a state which includes all its individual members as individual members of a family without discrimination on account of color or race or on account of creed, unless the creed compels its holder to war against the framework of the society in which he works and enjoys the full fruits of his work. Yes, this kind of religion is taught, not so much by ideas as by practice. This orientation

²⁸Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, II Human Destiny (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943), pp. 86-87.

may or may not include an idea of God. For awhile it will not, because the idea of God has got in the way of the actuality of God for so long in Western civilization that it will be regarded with suspicion. It may never return in the form we are used to. That is not too important to us just now.

What is important is this. If there is a heart of justice in the universe it is beating now in the Red Army. I believe in that heart. I call it God. And what I believe in is not an idea but a fact and I see that fact expressed now in the Russian Revolution which stands alone between the modern liberal democratic world and the Counter Reformation which in the form of Fascism aims to fulfill the anathema against toleration and to destroy the liberal democratic world. The centre of the Counter Reformation is of course in Rome but the forces of the Reformation have been largely turned around and redirected so that they constitute in effect an ally to Rome. Whether chapel or church, the institutions of "religion" have become the beneficiary of the status quo, have distributed husks of rhetoric to the multitudes, disdaining to notice the gathering of the storm of the Counter Reformation.

. . . . God in whose name all revolutions are drowned in blood is the maker of all revolutions. God in whose name the Counter Reformation has been carried on during the past 400 years made the Reformation itself and sickened of it when it abandoned its idea of the nobility of work for the common good, when it made an idol out of a book instead of a church, and when it worshipped a new name instead of an old name. God is not a book or a church. God is not a name or a word.²⁹

The whole point of Leslie's forthright assertion is simply this: While the transcendental reference is formally denied in Marxian communism, there are historical reasons for this denial. Leslie is of the opinion that the creative power referred to in the transcendental reference is operative in some aspects of the civilization of the Soviet Union. The meaning of God for Leslie is more immanent than it is for Niebuhr. "God is the only concept man has made which is the seed of unlimited progress and development, the lifter of every horizon. The Protestant fights for this concept."³⁰

Another voice to add to Leslie's in an attempt to modify Niebuhr's criticism and to elaborate on the religious character

²⁹Kenneth Leslie, "Russia's Religion," The Protestant, August-September, 1943, p. 7.

³⁰Ibid., p. 2.

of a civilization inspired by Marxian philosophy is found, oddly enough, in a recent article written by Frederick May Eliot. We write "oddly enough," for it is likely that Eliot is not as fully aware as Niebuhr of the irreconcilable interests of power groups of society. At all events, he is more tolerant than Niebuhr in his appreciation of the religious impulses of the Soviet Union:

Religion in the life of a great nation is revealed far more clearly by action than by words, and what Soviet Russia has done in the last twenty-five years is the best evidence against the proposition that she is anti-religious. She has acted as a great nation would act if religion were the driving power behind its program. Faith in the possibility of translating the idea of a new life into terms of actual achievement, faith that no outside power can muster sufficient strength to destroy the liberty which her people desire, faith in the ultimate success of her national dream in spite of a thousand difficulties and setbacks--this faith has had the force and the virility that are the signs of religion in its most powerful stage. Perhaps the very power of it has frightened the timid adherents of older forms of religion from which much of the original energy has been drained off, but surely the religion of America is not willing to admit that it is senescent, and terrified by the appearance on the other side of the globe of a religion of youth!³¹

Now as to the third criticism of Niebuhr, namely, that Marxian demonic pretensions "will prevent the Western world from achieving a workable and stable system of social ownership for some decades to come,"³² it is only fair to Niebuhr to state that later statements of his have corrected his earlier criticisms. The joint efforts of the United Nations in this war, especially the new partnership with the Soviet Union has brought about a re-valuation of the aims of the Soviet Union. These aims, as they will affect the post-war settlement, do not apparently involve the forcible establishment of Soviet republics in Western Europe. The flexibility of Stalin's foreign policy seems to give evidence

³¹Frederick May Eliot, "A Religious View of the USSR," Soviet Russia Today, May, 1943, p. 23.

³²Reinhold Niebuhr, Christianity and the Social Revolution, p. 469.

of his desire for a stable world order. This is fully acknowledged by Niebuhr:

The possibility of achieving a stable world order, with Russia as one of the dominant nations of that order, is enhanced by the fact that Russia and the Western nations have a common interest in its establishment. The primary obstacle to achieving it is found in the relationship between Russia and the remnants of the worldwide Communist Party. Russia, as a nation, is not aggressive. All its natural inclinations will be for the maintenance of peace and the status quo after the war. But the Communist Party is the symbol and the instrument of Russia's spiritual imperialism, or rather of the worldwide ambitions of a political movement which has Russia for a base and which ostensibly still desires a world revolution. Stalin has proved again and again that the instincts and responsibilities of a Russian statesman dominate his thought and lead to a subordination of the purer Communist faith, of which Leon Trotsky was in a sense the symbol.³³

Niebuhr still saw in the Communist Party a danger, but his insight into world politics proved to be right when he predicted the liquidation of the Comintern:

Even if Stalin should liquidate the Communist Party in the Anglo-Saxon world, he is certainly not powerful enough to liquidate orthodox communism as the creed of a minority of intellectuals and workers. If he cuts it adrift, it will probably revert to its purer, more international, and more apocalyptic form. It will in short become Trotskyite. It will be fatuous rather than dangerous. At least it will not embarrass, by its support, the only possible settlement of world problems, a settlement in which Russia as a nation must be allied with the other powerful nations in the hegemony of a world organization.³⁴

It would appear that Niebuhr's earlier criticisms to the effect that Marxian communism would lead to demonic pretensions endangering a stable development of the Western world was premature. Marxian philosophy, as expressed through the spokesmen of the Soviet Union, has been an extremely flexible fabric designed to suit the requirements of Soviet foreign policy. The proper criticism of Marxism as used by these spokesmen, is not that it is

³³Reinhold Niebuhr, "Russia and the West," The Nation, January 16, 1943, pp. 83-84.

³⁴Reinhold Niebuhr, "Russia and the West," The Nation, January 23, 1943, p. 125.

too rigid, but too flexible. The interminable zig-zags of Communist parties, in order to reflect in the most mechanical fashion the needs of Soviet security, are precisely the features that bring about doubt and distrust in the minds of Western liberals.

Evaluation of Niebuhr's approach to Marxism.-- Niebuhr's earlier book, Moral Man and Immoral Society, shows a remarkable appreciation of the conflicts of power politics, and of the part played by Marxian philosophy in sharpening and clarifying this conflict by avoiding the errors of "Christian moralism" and "bourgeois rationalism." In his later works, however, Niebuhr seemed to strengthen his own theological position, and to criticize Marxism severely from the standpoint of that position. We have already seen that Niebuhr had to reduce considerably his former aspersions, in view of the moderation of Soviet aims.

Our impression is that Niebuhr's theological point of view has thrown into high relief "the depth of spirit in the structure of human personality"³⁵ and we count this a gain over the over-simplified assumptions of Marxism.

In the first place, one may readily agree with Niebuhr that Marxism has neglected "the depth of spirit in the structure of human personality." While Marxism, as we have seen before gives due place for the interaction of mental and spiritual factors with economic forces--while it even implies ethical principles--it is nevertheless true that it is difficult to find in the Marxian classics a doctrine of man. The doctrine of the individual in Marxism is rather over-simplified. Malcolm Cowley, a frequent contributor to The Nation and The New Republic, testifies to this fact:

³⁵Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, I Human Nature, p. 47.

And the fact is that a movement like Communism, which lays so much stress on society as a whole, is tempted to paint a somewhat bare and simplified picture of the individual. He needs food, clothing, shelter and sex; he acts in the light of logic and according to what he thinks are his best interests; for the rest, he is either naturally good or else he can be kneaded and shaped into goodness by an all-knowing state that controls the schools, the press and the instruments of production. That is roughly the conception of the human unit on which Communist policy seems to depend; it is one that was widely held in the nineteenth century. But the Economic Man and the Reasoning Man of the nineteenth-century philosophers have been largely destroyed by later researches into the nature of men's thinking and men in society: by Freud and Pavlov, by Frazer and Durkheim, to mention only four of the pioneers.³⁶

Intelligent proponents of dialectical materialism are beginning to realize this fact. The storm of controversy recently brought to light in Science and Society centered around the lack of a precise definition of the human psyche in terms of dialectical materialism. Dr. Cavendish Morton admitted

. . . . the lack of any adequately formulated psychology based on dialectical materialism. In the U. S. S. R. a psychologist recently urged his colleagues to tackle this job. Here as there the ground has merely been cleared by some sound criticism of the mechanistic and idealistic trends in current theories.³⁷

Again, Niebuhr has given due weight--some might say undue weight--to the tendencies in human nature making for self-love, arrogance, pride. Here is a typical statement of his:

The actual situation is that man may be redeemed from self-love in the sense that he acknowledges the evil of it and recognizes the love of God as the only adequate motive of conduct; and may yet be selfish in more than an incidental sense. The pride of a bishop, the pretensions of a theologian, the will-to-power of a pious business man, and the spiritual arrogance of the church itself are not mere incidental defects, not merely "venial" sins. They represent the basic drive of self-love, operating upon whatever new level grace has pitched the new life.³⁸

³⁶Malcolm Cowley, "Faith and the Future," Whose Revolution? ed. by Irving DeWitt Talmadge (New York: Howell, Soskin, 1941), pp. 152-153.

³⁷Dr. Cavendish Morton, "Ethics and Marxism, A Controversy," Science and Society, Summer, 1943, p. 255.

³⁸Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man: II, Human Destiny, p. 137.

Spiritual arrogance may be present among Marxists, and this is again duly recognized by Malcolm Cowley:

There is another weakness in Communism as a system of ethics that has become more evident with the years. It has failed to develop the feeling of human limitations, the personal humility that distinguishes the Christian ideal at its best. It has failed to give a warning against individual pride--in Christian theology the sin of the angels, for which Lucifer was cast out of heaven. Pride was the vice of Marx himself: it led him into those interminable quarrels with Proudhon, Vogt, Lassalle and Bakunin in which he was, quite possibly, right at every point, but certainly wrong in the battle as a whole, wrong to fight it so relentlessly and at such an expenditure of energy and bile. And Marx's pride has come down through the movement as a persistent blemish (though Engels was nearly free of it, and Lenin was personally humble). One result of it has been a series of egoistic quarrels fought unrelentingly and often weakening the Communist Party as a whole; neither side would admit that it might possibly be mistaken. Another result has been that although Communists continue to act with admirable courage under persecution, they have become personally arrogant when raised to power, and have in many cases been careless of the human units, the human destinies under their control.³⁹

The sin of pride, a valuable emphasis in Niebuhr's theological anthropology, is therefore apparent in many Communists, as it was in Marx himself. Niebuhr is right in presenting dimensions and depths of the human spirit which are ignored by dialectical materialism. Marxism is in great need of that spirit of humility that characterizes the Christian ideal at its best. Marxism is also in great need of a doctrine of man that will take into account the dialectical contradictions operating in the human psyche. It may very well be that Paul Tillich's work in evolving a dialectical doctrine of man under the guise of symbolic and mythical language, is really doing the work of dialectical materialism at the level of the human psyche. This is a question too far-reaching to be adequately examined here. We merely throw out the suggestion for future investigation.

Niebuhr's strictures against Marxist utopianism and opti-

³⁹Cowley, Whose Revolution?, pp. 154-155.

mism should not blind us, however, to his appreciation of the role of power groups in history, and of the justifiable claims of the working class as a power group among others. It is to be hoped that the influence of religious Marxists such as Niebuhr will serve to temper and sober the over-optimism of orthodox Marxists. It is equally to be hoped that Niebuhr's realistic anthropology will not descend, as is feared by some of his fellow theologians, into a pessimistic doctrine of man.⁴⁰

⁴⁰A thorough examination of Niebuhr's anthropology, and a discussion of its realistic and, as some claim, pessimistic, features, lies outside the scope of this Thesis, which is concerned with Niebuhr's appreciation of Marxism, and not with Niebuhr's theology as such. For a negative evaluation of Niebuhr's more recent trends of thought see Gregory Vlastos, "Sin and Anxiety in Niebuhr's Religion," The Christian Century, October 1, 1941, pp. 1202-1204; Edwin E. Aubrey, "Human Destiny--Reinhold Niebuhr, A Symposium," The Union Review, Spring, 1943, pp. 20-21.

CHAPTER V

THE PLACE OF MARXISM IN THE THOUGHT

HARRY F. WARD

Professor Harry F. Ward was until recently Professor of Christian Ethics at Union Theological Seminary. He has had a long experience of active concern with social issues and of participation in social struggles. He is credited as the author of the now interdenominationally adopted "Social Creed of the Churches." He has occupied the important posts of executive secretary of the Methodist Social Service Federation, chairman of the American Civil Liberties Union, and president of the now defunct American League against War and Fascism. He was also for a time a member of the faculties of Northwestern University and of the Boston University School of Theology.

Professor Ward, as his record indicates, has taken a more than lively interest in many of the controversial issues on the labor front. As a result of this active participation, he has written important works making clear his own position as a Christian Socialist, or more exactly, a Christian Marxist. He has made a thorough study of Marxism and he has given his application of that philosophy in his book In Place of Profit. This work he wrote while spending a sabbatical year in the Soviet Union in 1931-32. His most recent work is Democracy and Social Change, giving his views prior to the entry of the United States into the war. He has been able to integrate a rather thorough-going absorption of Marxian principles with his religious views. It is this integration and its evaluation that we shall now discuss.

The economic order and the ethics of Jesus.-- There is a forthright quality in Harry Ward's writings that is not met in the works of other Christian socialists. There is no quibbling about social issues, no temporizing, no alleviation or distortion of the antagonism, conscious or unconscious, between our present economic order and the ethics of Jesus, as interpreted by Ward. This derivation of a sharp criticism of capitalism from the standpoint of the ethical teachings of Jesus recurs again and again in his writings. Let us give a few examples of his Christian criticism of the economic order:

The ethics of capitalistic industrialism aims at economic efficiency and mutual advantage through the exaltation of self-interest, with such enlargement of other human capacities as may thereafter indirectly accrue. The ethic of Jesus seeks human development directly through the limitation of self-interest by mutual adjustment and mutual aid. . . .

Nor can a religion whose function it is to develop the ethic of Jesus remain half bound to, and half free from, the living death of this acquisitive society. It must either transfuse our failing economic order with new life or die with it. It cannot, as in the matter of the war, declare a moral moratorium. The economic order is permanent. Therefore the followers of Jesus must either get his moral currency adopted or the religion that names itself after him will have to suspend payment altogether.¹

The key to Harry Ward's derivation of his social outlook from the ethics of Jesus is the ideal of community living. The present economic order produces and supports the acquisitive spirit, a direct antithesis, as we have seen, of the spirit of mutual aid and adjustment--the implications of the Kingdom of God. In contradistinction to the thought of Reinhold Niebuhr, where this question has supreme importance, Harry Ward cares little as to whether the Kingdom is an apocalyptic vision which cannot in the nature of the case be fully realized in history, or whether it is capable of historical embodiment:

¹Harry F. Ward, Our Economic Morality and the Ethic of Jesus (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929), pp. 9-10.

Also there is good ground for holding that Jesus' hope for the salvation of Israel was that, by exemplifying and developing in their relations with other peoples that truly social morality which the prophets had urged upon them, his nation would fulfill its destiny in the world as the servant of mankind. Certainly the idea of the Kingdom--or reign--of God, whether viewed as an apocalyptic future event or as a gradual present development, involves community living; it is an organized commonwealth.²

The clash between the community ideal implied in the ethics of Jesus and the present order lies in the fact that this order promised justice, freedom, and wealth. Justice is not achieved because of the unequal distribution of incomes, an unequal distribution which is out of proportion to the effort of the individual concerned, or the social value of his work. There is likewise little freedom which really matters, freedom of access to the good life. And the army of unemployed in depression years negates the promise of wealth as given by the idyllic assumptions of orthodox economists.

The ethic of capitalism is all too often the ethic of power which is destructive, while Ward considered the ethic of Jesus as constructive and directing men to build a new social order:

It asks them [men] to build a social order on the foundation of intelligence and goodwill, insisting upon their essential interdependence. It takes the long view, and puts the ultimate values above the immediate. Against the morality of profit--which requires the strong to rule--it opposes the duty of the strong to serve. The opposite of love, a recent writer observes, is power. And power is destructive, while love is creative. Hence the ethic of Jesus, in which love is central and brotherhood ultimate--the condition of man's harmony with the eternal spirit--is a better guide to a more satisfying and enduring society than is the gospel of profit with its fatal reliance upon the efficiency of the powerful who are seeking first their own interest. One goes from strength to strength, the other from strength to weakness.³

As to the practical steps required to go "from strength to strength" in the reconstruction of society, Harry Ward has lit-

²Ibid., p. 47. ³Ibid., p. 179.

tle to say in this early volume of his. His criticisms are mostly economic and ethical refutations of the assumptions of the classical economists, reinforced by the denunciations we have just quoted. The ethic of Jesus, he believes, shows men a new direction, if not a set of blueprints:

What is needed, then, from an ethical religion is a new sense of direction, a stimulus for advance at the points where science declares progress to be possible. What can properly be demanded of it is not a set of blueprints, but a chart which will show industrial society--now in a dead end--which way to move. And this the ethic of Jesus is able to supply. It moves men in the direction opposite to our present economic morality. Instead of the method of competition it calls men to cooperation; in place of the motivation of profit it urges men to serve one another; it substitutes for the end of property the creation of enduring fellowship between man and man the world over, between all men and the Eternal Spirit of the Universe.⁴

There is just a hint of a Marxian approach in the sense that in this new direction, the ethic of Jesus "runs into the trail of those who are seeking a solution of the problem from the purely scientific standpoint of consequences."⁵ This Marxian approach, in its fully developed form, we shall set forth later. It is clear that for Ward the principles of the Kingdom of God are extremely simple: enduring fellowship and community living between man and man throughout society, and a similar fellowship with the eternal spirit. A precise theological interpretation of the possibilities of this fellowship in history is lacking in Ward. This, as we intend to show, is due to Ward's peculiar attitude to theological issues. We shall discuss his attitude to theology in order to bring into greater relief his thorough-going understanding of economic issues in purely Marxian terms.

Theology as an escape from the social question.-- There is, in Harry Ward's writings a peculiar aversion to theological and philosophical discussion as such. Harry Ward enjoins his

⁴Ibid., p. 314.

⁵Ibid., p. 236.

readers to beware of mere intellectualism, for it yields fruits of moral futility.

Surely there is enough historical record of what happens when speculative questions are the first interest of theology. . . . A theology that is purely or predominantly metaphysical is foredoomed to lose in the struggle with sin, because it diverts man's energies elsewhere.

What then does it mean, especially after the social history of Unitarianism, that its left wing Humanists are more concerned with the abolition of God than with the attempt to secure opportunity for human development, that liberal theists are willing to argue with them concerning an issue which can only be demonstrated in ethical results. If the new interest in the problem of God is to expend itself in finding an argumentative answer to a godless Humanism, it is worse than a waste of time. It leaves the field of human living in possession of the enemies of religion while it seeks in words an answer to a perennial question whose only solution lies in ethical experience. By his fruits too is God also to be known.⁶

Ward approaches dangerously a merely pragmatic position in the sense that the perennial question of the existence of God is relegated to ethical experience. Presumably, God is to be known by the fruits he produces in ethical experience, and this experience, as we have shown, is to be gained most of all through the construction of a new social order. Hence, for Ward, the primary task is this social reconstruction. He is himself aware of his close approach to pragmatism, for he states: "In the end, however, a people whose chief contribution to philosophy has been Pragmatism is not likely to remain unduly absorbed in theology for its own sake."⁷ The criticism which Ward uses is therefore based upon a rejection of merely intellectual speculation for the more absorbing task of ethical action upon the social order. He fears that the cosmic aspect of the problem of God is merely an evasion from responsibility to an ethical God of righteousness making stern demands upon man. Wieman, Harry Elmer Barnes, and

⁶Harry F. Ward, Which Way Religion? (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1931), pp. 36-37.

⁷Ibid., p. 37.

even Whitehead suffer under his vitriolic pen:

Thus when Wieman seeks God by the empirical method, the field of search is the relation of the behavior of man to the behavior of the universe. His behavior with his fellow in the social order is scarcely explored at all. The ethical problem is viewed mostly in personal terms, though manifestly the social order bears upon the individual somewhat as the cosmos does. Similarly when Barnes champions a humanistic religion for the sake of a scientific morality, although himself a social scientist, he is nevertheless more concerned with the God of nature than with the God of man. . . . Absorption in the cosmic problem is a symptom of an era of moral defeatism. . . . Sometimes [an interest in theology] arrives with Whitehead at a metaphysical aestheticism, which sees the way to a moral universe but is inhibited by its approach from pursuing it, whose path leads to adoration but not to moral creativity. For those, who by temperament or training distrust the aesthetic impulse, the end of the search for the God of the cosmos apart from the God of man is absorption in the processes of the mind to the neglect of the practical needs of the unintellectual masses. This is the deepest treason of the intellectuals to humanity. The only way in which theology can escape becoming an accomplice of science in leading the masses into the bondage of a mechanized, money-making, order of life . . . is to continue the search for an ethical God whose presence can be practiced in the organized ways of human living, with whom men can cooperate in the working out of a real salvation from sins that are vividly concrete and terribly destructive.⁸

A choice must be made, according to Ward, between the ethical God of the Christian religion, who is known in the experience of social participation in struggles taken for the sake of justice, and the cosmic God. Priority in the social struggle is emphasized by Ward, for it is only thus "that we have any chance of coming to terms with the cosmic problem, which for all our science is still mystery at the core."⁹

In this revealing quotation, Ward shows himself to be much closer to the Humanist wing of the Unitarian Church, which he had criticized previously, than he is aware usually. He shows

⁸Ibid., pp. 38-40. It is interesting to note that the writer was able to make comparison between Wieman's cosmic theology and dialectical materialism, a comparison which earned the commendation of Ward himself, despite the condemnation he metes out to Wieman in the passage quoted. See Alfred Stiernotte, "Marx and Spirituality," *The Protestant*, February-March, 1942, pp. 77-86. It is true, however, that Wieman has not brought out the social implications of his doctrine.

⁹Ibid., p. 41.

his own immanental outlook by referring time and time again to the "cosmic energy" when he thinks of the cosmic problem at all. And he reminds the reader of H. G. Wells's lack of any close tie between his conception of God and the Veiled Being, as given in God the Invisible King. Because the relation between the cosmic energy and the Great Companion is not clearly given by Ward, he is therefore very close to a mere agnostic position:

When theology addresses itself to the central and neglected issue of the relation between the Cosmic Energy and the Great Companion then it will find itself on the way toward achieving a synthesis of the ethical, the mystical, and the metaphysical experience of God.¹⁰

Ward's own agnosticism may be illustrated through his references to the problem of the cosmic God in the terms of "cosmic energy":

The essential question about the cosmic energy is whether it is on the side of or indifferent to the achievement of a moral order. That can never be discovered by the processes of logic, useful as they are for verification.¹¹

Again we meet "cosmic energy" in this passage:

But when--following the ethic of Jesus--a man realizes his dependence upon all as well as the dependence of all upon him, his relation to the Eternal Spirit becomes just as mutual as his relation to his fellow men, particularly as he cooperates with cosmic energy in the economic process from which a purely theological religion and its God are excluded.¹²

There are instances, however, in Ward's writings, where the agnostic position given above is replaced by a view of nature which approaches Smyth's sacramentalism.¹³ Ward is then able to relate the ethical to the cosmic question:

Those who say that God made, and those who declare that God is continually making, this world must remember that He is expressed in it, now that men have begun to use it for their need, by the way it is used. When natural resources--which by the interpretation of religion embody the immanent God--are turned into property, what happens to that God? What is

¹⁰Ibid. ¹¹Ibid., p. 42.

¹²Harry F. Ward, Our Economic Morality and the Ethic of Jesus, p. 320.

¹³Supra, pp. 41, 42, 43.

the ethical nature of the supreme being who is expressed in the struggle of greed for power to break and enslave the lives of others? All religious thinking has looked at the earth in some sense as the expression of God, a manifestation of the supreme energy. If this is His body as well as the human race, and if both man and the earth are broken to pieces in the struggle for possession of it, what meaning has the sacramental phrase "broken for us"? Broken for our destruction and His? An ethical religion certainly cannot avoid the fact.¹⁴

It is interesting to pursue these references to "cosmic energy" in Ward's writings, not merely because of the light they shed upon the problems of theology, but also because they point in the direction of dialectical materialism. This philosophy, as we have seen, asserts the close connection between mind and matter as the two aspects of existence. Let us see how Ward thinks of the two aspects of cosmic energy:

Thus the interaction of mind and matter that runs all through life--nowhere more visible than in the machine which has become the magic symbol of an alleged materialism that in action is no materialism at all but the heroic conquest of life by the assertion of certain values in man and the determination to master destiny by realizing them--turns out to be the relation between two forms of energy. On the one hand it operates through inert substance, and on the other through the power to move, direct, choose, create, and defy circumstance even when perishing. Thus the problem of freedom is in part the question of adjustment between these two forms of energy.¹⁵

In a much later volume these two aspects of cosmic energy are again related:

As a matter of fact we live by a combination of matter and spirit, the cooperation of persons with inanimate nature. The machine joins them in common effort. In the broadest sense, the productive forces that enable the development of society consist of man's relationship with nature, the conjunction of his energy and the energy of the universe. But his energy is applied in and through his relations with his fellows. Thus the moral standards, the social institutions and legal forms he creates and abides by, condition the operation of the productive forces and become a part of them.
. . . .

¹⁴Ward, Our Economic Morality and the Ethic of Jesus, pp. 202-203.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 308.

In this combination and its results, it is the human factor that is decisive. The energy of the universe is waiting to be used. The degree of human knowledge determines when and how it can be used. . . . Nature is ready to cooperate but we are not. Man has thus become obstructive of nature. He is stopping nature from doing for him what it is willing to do if he will only relate himself to it properly. Beyond that, in his modern warfare, he is using nature for destruction as never before in his history. Thus he is separating himself from nature by which and through which he lives, and without which he cannot live.¹⁶

We believe we have mentioned almost all, if not all, the references in the three books from which we have quoted giving Ward's conceptions of cosmic energy and its relation to God. It is apparent that Ward is not consistent in the meanings which he attaches to cosmic energy. At one time, he will claim that its friendliness or unfriendliness to man is a problem incapable of solution by logical methods, and is then approaching agnosticism. At another time, he will identify it with the immanence of God, which immanence is destroyed in the acquisitive process of modern society. Again, he will consider this cosmic energy as taking two forms, one unconscious in matter itself, and the other conscious in the mind of man. In other words, cosmic energy presents itself under two aspects, one material, the other spiritual. How closely this conception approximates dialectical materialism will be apparent if we but consider that in this very philosophy reality is conceived as a living unity of mind and matter. John Lewis, an exponent of this philosophy, shows a close relationship with Ward:

But if matter had been conceived as developing, as active, and mind as the coming to consciousness of matter, we should find ourselves with neither a dead materialism nor a groundless subjectivism but a living unity of mind and matter.¹⁷

¹⁶Harry F. Ward, Democracy and Social Change (New York: Modern Age Books, 1940), pp. 37-39.

¹⁷John Lewis, ed., A Textbook of Marxist Philosophy (London: Victor Gollancz Limited, no date), p. 53.

Again, Julius F. Hecker, of Moscow University, another exponent of dialectical materialism, substantiates John Lewis:

The Dialectical Materialist accepts both quantity and quality, or extension and mind, as the attributes of ultimate reality. Thought and being are not quantitative differentiations of the same substance; they are intrinsically different though always in inseparable unity. Nature is thus potentially endowed with the attribute of spirit, which merges into consciousness in the process of development.¹⁸

In these quotations, we see the full elaboration of Ward's tentative approach to dialectical materialism with his notion of the two aspects of cosmic energy. And we believe we have here the key to Ward's rejection of theology. The transcendental aspect of God is totally absent in Ward while the immanent aspect is reduced to the energy of the universe about which he is either agnostic, or considers it under two aspects, the material and the spiritual. The ultimate reason why Ward rejected theology in his earlier books, and disregarded it entirely in his latest, is that he was consciously or unconsciously throwing overboard the transcendental aspects of God and making his way to a conception of reality which is nothing but pure dialectical materialism. Theology, however, in Tillich's sense of an ultimate reference to reality, cannot of course be rejected by Ward or anyone else. The point is that Ward was gradually developing his theological principles from dialectical materialism, and thus disclaimed any interest in the cosmic question, or at least made it secondary to the ethical question.

When he spent his sabbatical year in the Soviet Union, he was of the opinion that dialectical philosophy would eventually return to considerations of contradictions in the cosmos, the

¹⁸Julius F. Hecker, "Christianity and Communism in the Light of the Russian Revolution," Christianity and the Social Revolution, ed. by John Lewis, Karl Polanyi, and Donald K. Kitchin (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1935), p. 325.

contradictions with which religion has been concerned:

Their philosophy must needs turn its attention to those inner contradictions in life itself, in the nature of the universe, with which religion at its best has been concerned. These, in its scornful rejection of religion, Communist philosophy has heretofore ignored as inconsequential or, in its engrossing concern with immediate practical needs, has denounced as dangerously diverting. But it may be presumed that these issues will sooner or later claim their due attention, for it would be contrary to the nature of the dialectical process for it to become static. If it is true to itself it must lead always to higher levels of life, to the answering of all questions, the solving of all contradictions.¹⁹

It is odd to note that Ward is here accusing the Communists of neglecting the cosmic problem, when he himself in an earlier book attacked the empirical theists and the humanists for their concern with it. We presume that Ward could still maintain some show of consistency by arguing that during the capitalist epoch of society the primary problem is the economic and its ethical implications, while, in a socialist order attention may then be turned to the cosmic problem since the more pressing ethical question has been largely solved. Such might be Ward's defense. And indeed there seems to be justification for the view that Communist philosophy is bound to achieve in future years a cosmic orientation that may possess the emotional overtones of cosmic mysticism. Ward is aware of this tendency:

In place of that struggle of the soul for union with the infinite which leads to withdrawal from the world they put a struggle of the person for unity with the social whole in whose creation he thus participates. Their thinking touches the cosmos in its assertion of a unified dialectical law in nature, history, and the mind. This assumes a rational principle in the universe, and an ethical principle in history, with which a man must creatively co-operate in order to move toward his social ideal. That the implications of this assumption should in less strenuous times be followed further is inevitable. Already students of philosophy begin to speak of looking for cosmic support for communist endeavor. The proletarian musicians in their resolution on creative principles declare that there is at present arising the demand for creating monumental musical forms which would embody the

¹⁹Harry F. Ward, In Place of Profit (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933), p. 444.

sensing of the cosmos by the working class which has entered into the period of socialism. But it is certain that when the Communist view of man's relation to the cosmos appears it will interpret the universe in social, not personal, terms and will be used to increase, not diminish, man's social creativity.²⁰

Ward's Marxian approach.-- This preliminary discussion of Ward's ethical impulse based on the Christian ideal of community living; and his neglect of theological issues because of absorption in social tasks of immediacy and urgency, leads naturally to a summary of his vigorous adoption of Marxian policies and perspectives. There is no space to represent fully with these perspectives, but sufficient material will be presented so as to show precisely in what way Ward accepts the Marxian philosophy, and in what minor points he differs from it.

An excellent way to approach Ward's thought is to consider an article he published in The Christian Century entitled "Judgment Day for Pacifists"--an article which should give delight to all those Christian realists who have rejected simple Christian moralism, even though they may not see eye to eye with Ward. Writing in 1935, at a time when the class struggle was characterized by sporadic violence, such as the assault against the bonus army in Washington, Ward calls upon the pacifists to declare their attitude now on the question of violence. Their decision is all the more urgent since capitalist society reveals a basic antagonism:

²⁰Ibid., p. 456. The question of monumental forms of music to embody the sensing of the cosmos by the working class is a tantalizing one for those who have an interest in the metaphysical and symbolic meanings suggested by music. For our part, we may say that the meaning of the dialectical processes of nature and history was symbolized for us by hearing for the first time Bach's B-Minor Mass at a musical evening in Professor J. L. Adams' home. No other composition, in our mind, can suggest the victory, the glory, and the ecstasy of man's grappling with his own historic existence, and his cosmic support.

This outburst of actual violence in the present is an expression of the same underlying situation that brought forth the hypothetical talk about violence in the future. Both these developments signify that an irreconcilable antagonism in the nature of capitalistic society is coming to a head, that the day of conflict draws near. The time has gone by to argue on historical grounds what the beneficiaries of an existing order will do when their powers and privileges are threatened by its collapse. Before us is the record of what they are doing. The Christian pacifists who are so busy discussing what they will or will not do when the social revolution comes need to understand that the first phase of it has begun in this country. The breakdown of the economic machine, its increasing inability to enable the people to supply each other with what they are capable of producing, submits the whole social structure to a revolutionary strain. The blind struggles of the workers, farmers and unemployed are one result; the violent resistance of the people of property and their legal defenders is another.

The immediate question for Christian pacifists therefore is: What are you doing, and what are you going to do, about this violence that is actually happening now? Christian pacifists face the test of their role in history at this present moment, not at some future date. It may be possible to stop the violence of the capitalists and their cohorts now.

It is therefore time for Christian pacifists to call the roll, to ask themselves and their leaders: Where were you while these things were going on? Were you supporting any of the organizations that were trying to stop them? Were you exposing and denouncing with righteous indignation those who were planning and executing these deeds of cruelty? Were you demanding in concrete situations the establishment of the economic justice without which there would be no peace for all our crying of peace?²¹

These are indeed very challenging questions for Christian pacifists, questions which very few of them have faced. Relying on the pure impact of mind upon mind, or soul upon soul--"soul force"--few of them are aware of the fact that in a contest of power this idealistic reliance may prove merely ideological. Political struggles are contests of power, and it is by participation in these struggles now while parliamentary action is still possible, that the eventual outcome in a peaceful or a violent transition will largely be determined. Ward states pointedly:

This is the day of judgment for Christian pacifists; not tomorrow or the day after when the hour of the social revo-

²¹Harry F. Ward, "Judgment Day for Pacifists," The Christian Century, December 18, 1935, pp. 1620-1621.

lution strikes.²²

How far should this participation go? Should it extend to communists? Ward was strongly impressed by the decisions of the Seventh Congress of the Comintern according to which communists were prepared to participate with other forces in an anti-fascist coalition government as indeed took place later in France and Spain. He was concerned that Christians should answer this question in the affirmative:

Those Christians who have already answered yes to these questions have done so under the pressure of an approaching historic catastrophe of unparalleled magnitude. They are burdened with the realization of what will happen to millions of human personalities if fascism with its increasing drive toward war cannot be prevented from capturing the democratic countries. To them it is clear that the forces which make jointly for fascism and for war in the declining period of the capitalist economy are so powerful that there is no possibility of defeating them except by uniting in action for this purpose all the forces which seek to move life in the contrary direction. To them it seems self-evident that because of their dynamic character the communist forces must be engaged in the allied defense of freedom and peace if the struggle is to be won. Those who realize this also face the practical question whether the participation of the communists in the battle does not prevent the unity which is essential to success. But to succumb to this dilemma as insuperable is to surrender the future without a struggle. Since united action is the condition of now defeating fascism and war, it becomes necessary to test its possibility by bending every energy to the effort to achieve it.²³

To the questions raised in view of the communists' proposal of a dictatorship of the proletariat, Ward is of the opinion that this dictatorship is a group dictatorship merely for the period of transition from capitalism to socialism, and declares it to be a temporary necessity. Ward thus accepts at face value the statements of communists as to the ultimate passing away of the dictatorship and the withering away of the state.²⁴ He is

²²Ibid., p. 1621.

²³Harry F. Ward, "Christians and Communists," The Christian Century, December 25, 1935, p. 1651.

²⁴Ibid., p. 1652.

still hopeful, however, that the necessity for this dictatorship will be tested out in practice:

It is obvious that if a united movement could now be developed in this country to defend the democratic process against the rising forces of fascism, the thesis of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" will be tested out in our social laboratory. The question whether the democratic process can or cannot provide the way of transition into the next stage of human society will then be practically demonstrated. If it can be used effectively to provide the beginnings of the kind of society which is sought by both communists and Christians, the communists will be as delighted as anybody else because they know that they will thereby be saved a great deal of suffering.²⁵

In this way, Ward is very optimistic about the possibility of a peaceful, parliamentary transition from capitalism to socialism, conditioned upon a broad unity in the labor and progressive forces. But should this eventuality not be possible, he takes the view that in any case the dictatorship of the proletariat will only be temporary. He thus has none of the serious apprehensions entertained by Reinhold Niebuhr and discussed in the previous chapter as to the possibility of this dictatorship's degenerating into a tool of power used in self-perpetuation by a new ruling class autocracy. In the first place, Ward believes that the Russian Revolution itself was democratic:

The history of the Russian Revolution makes it clear that Lenin refused to move to establish a government until he was sure from the decisions of the Soviets that the Bolshevik program had the support of the overwhelming majority of the people. In the meaning of the word, and in practice, the Soviet is the equivalent in the Russian scene of the town meeting of old New England. The Bolsheviks had been teaching the people "You must get ready to take power," and when the opportunity came, under their leadership, the people took it.²⁶

In his very thorough and very partial study of the Soviet system, into which it is unnecessary to go into detail at this

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Harry F. Ward, Democracy and Social Change (New York: Modern Age Books, 1940), p. 140.

point, In Place of Profit, Ward shows his optimism as to the eventual withering away of the dictatorship. He is aware that ruling groups do not relinquish their power easily, but is of the opinion that the Party will be true to its pronouncements of ultimate disappearance:

History is full of cases in which a priesthood guarding a sacred truth has become the ruling power and finally more mighty than the truth itself, which it has then corrupted and destroyed. The Communist leaders recognise this danger and try to avert it by continually recruiting from the masses. But they rely more on teaching the masses to think and act according to the dialectical method, for that will make the Party ultimately unnecessary. In the Communist society where people will be sufficiently intelligent to choose wisely, and socially minded enough to act for the common weal, its leadership will not be needed. Stalin recognises this in his "Leninism":

It follows from this that as soon as class has been abolished, as soon as the dictatorship of the proletariat has been done away with, the Party likewise will have fulfilled its function and can be allowed to disappear.

This calls to mind a passage at the end of the Bible that forecasts a society in which there will be no church because none is needed, ...²⁷

In other words, Ward simply repeats the official Communist statements as to the withering away of the state and the dictatorship. He has no other foundation for his belief except his own faith in Communist policy, and his own estimate of human nature. In Communist society, human nature "will be sufficiently intelligent to choose wisely, and socially minded enough to act for the common weal." But this is precisely the point which is to be proved. Reinhold Niebuhr and other dialectical theologians would certainly characterize Ward's optimism as Utopian in this respect. It may be that Niebuhr has a strain of pessimism in his views, but who can deny that Ward is here over-optimistic? The question is a complex one, to be settled, or at least partly answered by future history. It springs in part from Ward's lack of a clearly defined doctrine of man. We shall return to this as-

²⁷Ward, In Place of Profit, pp. 427-428.

pect of Ward's thought later.

Returning to the question of cooperation between Christians and communists, Ward agrees that this collaboration would be impossible if communists denied religious freedom. He is of the opinion that "the position of the communist party in the Anglo-Saxon countries is clear on that vital point."²⁸ Real differences exist between Christians and communists, but these are to be resolved by the method of exchange and the sharing of experience and knowledge, and not by emotional argument and conflict. Ward concedes that the communist position on religion is based on insufficient evidence:

The communist position on religion is demonstrably based upon insufficient data and too limited experience. The type of religion that European communists have known is just as bitter against the radical religious forces as it is against the communists and would deal with them if it could with precisely the same methods of repression. Furthermore, the communist analysis of religion is not true to its own philosophic record. In fact, there does not exist a dialectical analysis of religion. How then are the communists to be convinced of these things and to be shown that social revolutionary dynamic in religion which has never come within their experience or on their horizon? Obviously it can be done effectively only through association in some common action for common ends.²⁹

Here we meet once more a very characteristic emphasis in Ward: the dismissal of controversial and philosophic considerations for urgent joint participation in social struggles with the conviction that such joint action will resolve intellectual differences. Such may be the case, but this action is not the sole manner of achieving understanding as to the respective policies of competing groups. Intellectual and philosophic analysis has its place, witness the extensive philosophical argumentation against Proudhon, Ruge, Strauss, Baur, and others on the part of

²⁸Ward, The Christian Century, December 25, 1935, p. 1652.

²⁹Ibid.

Marx; and Lenin's vitriolic discussions of the Viennese school of empirio-critics, Machists, and logical positivists.

Ward may be correct, however, in stating that a dialectical analysis of religion does not exist. Marxists see in religion merely the ideological tool of the ruling class to enforce its decisions. But what of the characteristic structure of the human mind and soul which must exist to give rise to religious phenomena? Marxism does not consider this structure. That is to say, it has no doctrine of man as such, only a doctrine of man as part of society. May we not hazard the guess that a doctrine of man on dialectical lines is perhaps being worked out by Paul Tillich in which the dialectical play of mythical and ideological symbols is studied in the primitive consciousness? We shall return to this aspect of the question in the chapter on Tillich.

There is no need to quote at greater length Ward's position in relation to the usual Marxian theses. His appreciation of the Marxian position on the class struggle, the possibility of ruling groups opposing change by parliamentary means, the eventual "withering away of the proletarian state" have been given in the previous pages. More quotations of this sort would merely substantiate what has already been given. Let us now consider those few instances where Ward criticizes Marxism.

Criticism of Marxism in Ward.-- The earlier works of Ward contain more serious criticisms of Marxism than his later works simply because Ward in the last fifteen years has become progressively more thorough-going and uncritical in his acceptance of Marxism. For instance, in his Our Economic Morality and the Ethic of Jesus, published in 1929, there were several criticisms of a narrow interpretation of the materialistic conception of history. Ward took issue with the conception of selfishness as

the ruling force, quoting Niebuhr to support him:

This doctrine does not mean that life is and must be controlled by economic selfishness. Too many followers of Marx have unnecessarily allowed themselves to take over the intelligent self-interest thesis of the capitalists. In their zeal to oppose a mere sentimental idealism, with its vague talk of service and sacrifice, they pursue the argument to a reductio ad absurdum by claiming that service to the common weal--including martyrdom--is done only because it gives the greatest satisfaction. This puts in reverse gear the point that Niebuhr has stressed as the paradox of Christianity--self-realization through sacrifice.³⁰

Ward also takes issue with Bukharin, one of the leading Communist dialecticians, for the mechanical way in which he used certain basic propositions and thus did not allow for the interaction between the mind of man and the material conditions of existence:

A similar proposition is that "the mental life of society is a function of the forces of production." But what are the forces of production apart from the mental life? When tools once appear--and before them there are no forces of production--their use and the development of the mind is inseparable, this interdependence coming to a climax when science becomes one of the forces of production. Again it would prove just as much to say that the forces of production are a function of the mental life.³¹

Ward correctly interprets Marxism when he states that Marx and Engels admitted the interaction between "ideas, ideals, sentiments," and "machines and goods."³² The fatalistic element in Bukharin's interpretation of Marxism is compared with the fatalism involved in Calvinism:

The Calvinist relies upon an over-ruling providence, the Catholic upon Holy Church, the Communist upon economic predestinarianism; he literally finds God in the machine. Yet when we turn from metaphysics to fact we get another example of the contradictory elements in this creature man; we find a most powerful expression of the human will accentuated by the very fatalism of the philosophy, using and mastering the force it claims to be driven by. So the Calvinist turned his God, and the Romanist his church, to his own ends, as the Communist does the machine and the economic structure of society. And it is certain that whatever part he plays in making the future will be in spite of, rather than because of, the fatal-

³⁰Ward, Our Economic Morality and the Ethic of Jesus, pp. 290-291.

³¹Ibid., p. 292.

³²Ibid., p. 294.

istic element in his philosophy. Fatalists endure well the world of today, but they do not make the world of tomorrow.³³

Bukharin is not now regarded as an official exponent of Marxist philosophy. He was liquidated in the Moscow trials. It would add to one's regard for the Soviet government if one felt sure that part of the reason for his liquidation was his fatalistic interpretation of Marxism. But can we be sure?

As a result of his studies in the Soviet Union, Ward became convinced that the dialectical method was not mechanism:

. . . . the dialectical method is not the mechanical selection of dominant or majority elements as is being done by some Marxists elsewhere; on the contrary it selects from the concrete situation by analysis, the creative, revolutionary, world transforming elements and joining with them, helps them on to victory.³⁴

In his latest book, Democracy and Social Change, Ward takes issue with the "Marxist fundamentalists" who imagine that the working class is the chosen deliverer for mankind:

The prediction of the inevitable victory of the working class, however, rests more on faith than on evidence. At this point the argument is not complete, as it is in the case of the capitalists. By inference the victory of the working class derives from the increasing pauperism of the wage earners, but actually this point is one in the specifications that show the unfitness of the capitalists to administer society. Also it gives support to the thesis of social revolution from the rebellion of the misery group which is not supported by the history of revolutions nor by the main argument of the Manifesto.³⁵

Ward's point is that a proper reading of the Manifesto will indicate that the division of the classes is not merely between capitalists and the lowest paid workers, but a division running "through all classes, through all labor, religious and reform organizations."³⁶

³³Ibid., p. 295.

³⁴Ward, In Place of Profit, p. 404.

³⁵Ward, Democracy and Social Change, p. 177.

³⁶Ibid., p. 178

Ward also points out an error of Marxist analysis in neglecting the middle classes under the assumption that they would automatically merge with the working classes. The experience of the German middle class shows that it can become "the backbone of the Nazi movement."³⁷ The strategy of the labor movement in America must take "the vocational interest and social claims of this group into account."³⁸

It is clear that Ward's criticisms of Marxism are not intended to be refutations of any part of the Marxist system, but are criticisms of distortions by narrow determinists and fatalists who pervert the system of Marx. Nor should intellectuals delay social advance by arguing over minor points of interpretation or the accuracy of forecasts in early Marxist writings. A summary of Ward's own support of Marxism, illustrating his typical impatience with the task of intellectual elucidation, is given as follows:

The Marxist analysis shows us clearly that social change is accomplished by the pressure of economic need, reinforced by universal ideals, and expressed in political power, that early capitalism made a new division of classes, and declining capitalism unites various sections of those classes in two opposing camps. It follows that the line-up for needed social change must unite all whose labor is necessary to operate the method of social-economic planning, which is the only substitute for profit-seeking economy; also that these forces must unite around that body of workers who have been longest in the struggle against capitalist oppression. The general advance depends upon how soon this body of workers can go beyond their position of winning benefits and reforms within the framework of the capitalist economy. For any intellectuals to delay this advance by promoting controversy over the accuracy of details in earlier Marxist forecasts is treason to the social need.³⁹

Critical evaluation of Ward's approach to Marxism.-- The preceding pages have indicated the main lines of criticism to be directed against Professor Ward as a religious Marxist of a rather crimson hue.

³⁷Ibid., p. 180.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid., p. 181.

In the first place, his interpretation of the Christian ethic is extremely simple, being derived from the social gospel school. To Ward, the ethic of Jesus is completely this-worldly, and is assumed to be capable of realization in history. These are precisely the points at which he differs from Niebuhr and Tillich, for he has not considered the eschatological frame of reference in Jesus' teachings and its implications for dialectical theology. This theology has made much of the "realistic" doctrine of man, and derives from that doctrine certain limiting factors as to the possibility of man's achieving the Christian ethic, or any other ethic for that matter, in history. We have already seen how Niebuhr uses this doctrine of man to deflate the Utopian hopes of a completely classless society. Without denying that Niebuhr may carry his doctrine to an extreme degree in the direction of pessimism, as is claimed by some of his critics, may we not assert that Ward's system is weakened by the lack of a comparable doctrine of man? There is, however, one passage in which Ward asserts the nature of man as derived from the ethic of Jesus:

The final clash between our current economic morality and the ethic of Jesus is over the nature of man. The capitalist economy rests on the hypothesis that man is a creature who prefers material comforts to moral values, who would rather have an increase in goods than in the quality of existence. The only future it can offer man is one in which he will get more conveniences but less freedom, justice, and fellowship, believing that thus he will be content. The ethic of Jesus rejects this estimate of human nature; insists moreover that the very making of it is the negation of personality, whose essence lies in the making of choices and whose development consists in preferring moral satisfactions to material, the ultimate to the immediate, the eternal to the temporal. . . . If it could be successful far beyond its claims, the economy of the acquisitive society would still stand condemned by the ethic of Jesus as utterly degrading and demonstrably destructive. His morality builds on the proven fact--which even the economy of self-interest falls back upon when it has made wars for itself--that the sacrificial capacity of man is continuously available for the improvement of society. His followers believe that men who can suffer and die for those whom they love and for their ideals will, when they understand the choice before them, take fewer creature comforts if that is the road to more justice and fellowship. Such a

faith in the capacity of man was one of the outstanding characteristics of Jesus. Without it, what remains of any faith in God--especially if God be conceived as ethical and immanent?⁴⁰

Here is indeed a doctrine of man, but the highest achievements of the human spirit, attained only in exceptional individuals, are apparently taken as the norm for the whole of humanity. And yet, Ward's position is consistent, for believing in a God who is completely immanent and ethical, he holds that God if he be God at all, must will the increasing fellowship and improvement of humanity on earth. Like the older theology of liberalism, Ward's faith in man is closely allied to faith in the immanent reality of God. Without this faith in man, faith in God would disappear.

In this quotation is also revealed Ward's theology. It is a man-centered theology, in fact a humanistic theology. For all his criticism of humanism, he is much closer to the humanistic theism of John Haynes Holmes than he is to the "new supernaturalism" of Niebuhr. As we have shown above,⁴¹ Ward's unexplicated theology consists of a completely immanent theism, which dissolves in his later works into references to "cosmic energy," showing a close similarity to dialectical materialism. Ward's theology reduces itself to this: an invincible conviction that the energy of the universe, both in its material and mental forms, is of such a structure as to make possible such an interaction between human ideals and material conditions of existence as to guarantee the realization of the goal of community living in history.

This is manifestly not the theology of dialectical theologians such as Niebuhr and Tillich. This is not the place to

⁴⁰Ward, Our Economic Morality and the Ethic of Jesus, pp. 321-322.

⁴¹Supra, pp. 94-100.

make a summary of Niebuhr's and Tillich's approaches. Niebuhr's we have already examined. Tillich's theology will appear in the chapter devoted to his discussion of Marxism. It is a moot question which of these theologies will bear fruit in history--Ward's liberal, Utopian, or Niebuhr's realist, pessimistic.

Ward is to be complimented for his unusual grasp of the Marxian system in its theoretical aspects. In practical applications, however, he shows an excess of zeal detrimental to critical acumen. He has been charged with reflecting too closely the Communist party line, and that charge can be substantiated to a large extent by an examination of his references to the present war in his latest book, Democracy and Social Change. It will be remembered that as a result of the failure of the Popular Front policy initiated by the Comintern in 1935, and the related failure to establish a peace block of democratic nations allied to the Soviet Union, a Nazi-Soviet non-aggression treaty was signed in 1939. The present war was denounced by Communists as a purely imperialistic war, and isolationists, pacifists, and Communists joined in an unholy alliance to keep the United States out of the war. From such evidence as we can gather, Ward seems to have been strongly influenced by this unholy alliance. He even seemed to favor Lindbergh's appeal that the United States keep its materials out of the war:

The Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has just replied to Lindbergh's appeal that we keep our materials out of the European war that, since we sold Hitler the materials to build up his war machine, it is only fair that we should sell Great Britain the materials wherewith to fight him. This correctly puts the whole national economy in the category of Merchants of Death.⁴²

Ward had not truly appreciated the vast difference between capitalist democracy, with all its weaknesses, and National

⁴²Ward, Democracy and Social Change, pp. 261-262.

Socialism. He remained impervious to the arguments of Marxists of equal eminence to himself, such as Harold Laski, that defense of democratic liberties in the war against Fascism left the way clear for the utilization of a parliamentary advance to socialism, which advance would be utterly impossible under Fascist domination. Ward seemed to rehash the old Communist arguments about a people's war being the only war in which they would fight, as well as about the inevitability of native fascism in any attempt to defeat foreign fascism:

Is there then no alternative? Can we defeat foreign fascism only by bringing native fascism to power? There is a way out of this terrible dilemma. It is to defeat the anti-democratic forces within our democracy. This can be accomplished only by successful resistance to every incitement to war except the concrete threat of invasion and to every attack upon democratic rights and social well-being, by putting the people's control over genuine national defense. This means that the democratic forces have to become strong enough to take control away from monopoly capitalism and its political agents, to establish a people's government, and then to lay the foundations of a democratic social economy so that a new base for peace can be offered to the rest of the world.⁴³

It is not necessary to take time to reject this ill-considered argument. In the first place, what chance was there to lay the foundations of a people's government at a time when the Fascist world menace necessitated action with whatever democratic instruments were available? To offer a new base for peace smacks too much of the British Communists' talk of a negotiated peace with Hitler prior to the Soviet Union's entry into the war in 1941. The Communists, and Harry Ward along with them, were guilty of that "infantile leftism" so justly condemned by Lenin, an infantile leftism which remains like a sickening disease in the Communist movement. Ward should be much more discriminating than he has been in his acceptance of Marxist philosophy, and in his collaboration with Communist and non-Communist groups. He

⁴³Ibid., pp. 273-274.

should stand as an independent thinker, much after the manner of men like Harold Laski, Max Lerner, Malcolm Cowley; and in that capacity give credit where credit is due, and apportion blame when such is due even to those closest to his way of thinking. Were he to do that, he would secure a much stronger following, and would be of much more value than he is not only to the democratic cause, but to his own Marxist cause.

We do not, however, regard Harry Ward's unreflective adoption of the Communist party line as the unpardonable sin. It is the sin of all those who by their invincible hatred of injustice and oppression ally themselves with the party that seems to represent the clearest opposition to such injustice and oppression. The leaders of that party have at times slavishly reflected the dictates of Moscow, or worked in their own interest. In the case of Harry Ward, it is the white heat of ethical passion which leads him into an uncritical acceptance of Communist policies. To be sure, it has yet to be proved that all Communist policies are evil. Moreover, because of the white heat of Ward's passion for social justice, one may feel inclined to forgive many things. Yet, one must not flinch the fact: white heat is often blinding heat.⁴⁴

⁴⁴For an approach by a group of Canadian semi-Marxists somewhat similar to Ward's, see R. B. Y. Scott and Gregory Vlastos, Towards the Christian Revolution (Macmillan, Toronto, 1936). We have not assigned a special chapter to the consideration of the views of these Canadian writers for the reason that they do not differ to any large extent from those already discussed.

CHAPTER VI

THE PLACE OF MARXISM IN HUMANISTIC THOUGHT

The humanist movement in religion.-- This religious development is one of the most recent in the American religious scene, stemming largely from a section of the Unitarian Church, though the Universalist Church, and some Reformed Rabbis share to a large degree its tendencies. The Unitarian ministers, John H. Dietrich, and Curtis W. Reese, have been most active in its inception and diffusion, so much so that there is still some rivalry among their followers as to which of these two leaders was the original founder of humanism.

The humanist movement gathered some sense of consciousness as an organized movement and as a type of religious thought through the publication of the Humanist Manifesto in 1933. Without going into a long discussion as to the contents of religious humanism, we may assert that the movement is not yet unified, but rather represents the individual tendencies of leaders finding objections to orthodox religion and even to a theistic position in religion. Among these tendencies we may mention;

1. Dietrich's humanism--largely eighteenth-century rationalism allied to modern scientific discoveries in an attack upon fundamentalism and "half-way liberalism," by which he means modernism. There is very little appreciation of social problems in this type of humanism, indeed a total neglect of Marxism.
2. Reese's humanism--largely a pragmatic and instrumental approach allied to John Dewey's philosophy. More at-

tention is paid to practical problems of democracy than is given by Dietrich, but still there is here no appreciation of Marxian modes of thought.

3. Bragg's humanism--more attention to practical problems of community living; a more restrained anti-theistic attitude; greater appreciation of social questions, even of men influenced by Marx, such as Max Lerner and Frederick L. Schuman,¹ though not of Marx himself.
4. Floyd's humanism--a doctrinaire, iconoclastic type allied to nebulous pacifism, nineteenth-century-romantic views of nature, and a large degree of sociological ignorance.

In view of these observations, religious humanism is still in process of evolution. It is rather more individualistic than social in character. While there is a Society of Socialist Christians, there is no Society of Socialist Humanists, and the portions of the Manifesto dealing with social reform have been little stressed in humanist writings.² There is only one Marxist humanist that we know of, Corliss Lamont, but we shall see later that he cannot be interpreted as a religious Marxist in any definite sense. Whether Marxian philosophy will penetrate into religious humanism to give a sense of historical meaning and direction remains to be seen.

The humanism of Feuerbach and Marxism.-- It is regrettable that American religious humanism has been so wrought up in its

¹Raymond B. Bragg, "Tribute to Schuman and Lerner," The Humanist, Spring, 1942, pp. 31-32.

²From a personal conversation with A. E. Haydon, the writer learned that Haydon and Reese had been commissioned to write a paper on the social significance of The Humanist Manifesto, but somehow they had "never got around to it."

own local patterns and problems that it has ignored the contribution to humanistic thought made by Ludwig Feuerbach, and the criticism of Feuerbach by Marx. Had it become aware of Feuerbach's approach and the pointed criticism of Marx, American religious humanism could have advanced to a more radical position. This is not the place to give the full development of Feuerbach's thought, and its supersession by Marx. The transition from Feuerbach's humanism to Marxism is given fully in Sidney Hook's important study From Hegel to Marx.³ We shall content ourselves with quoting a few of the theses of Marx on Feuerbach to make clear this transition:

IV

Feuerbach starts out from the fact of religious self-alienation, the duplication of the world into a religious, imaginary world and a real one. His work consists in the dissolution of the religious world into its secular basis. He overlooks the fact that after completing this work, the chief thing still remains to be done. For the fact that the secular foundation lifts itself above itself and establishes itself in the clouds as an independent realm is only to be explained by the self-cleavage and self-contradictoriness of this secular basis. The latter must itself, therefore, first be understood in its contradiction and then, by the removal of the contradiction, revolutionised in practice. Thus, for instance, once the earthly family is discovered to be the secret of the holy family, the former must then itself be theoretically criticized and radically changed in practice.

V

Feuerbach, not satisfied with abstract thinking, appeals to sensuous contemplation, but he does not conceive sensuousness as a practical, human-sensuous activity.

VI

Feuerbach resolves the religious essence into the human. But the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations.

Feuerbach, who does not attempt the criticism of this real essence, is consequently compelled:

1. To abstract from the historical process and to fix the religious sentiment as something for itself and to pre-

³Sidney Hook, From Hegel to Marx (New York: John Day, 1936).

suppose an abstract--isolated--human individual.

2. The human essence, therefore, can with him be comprehended only as "genus," as a dumb internal generality which merely naturally unites the many individuals.⁴

It is clear that the object of Marx's criticism of Feuerbach is the latter's assumption of a natural human essence --what our humanists would call "man" with a capital "M"--completely divorced from social conditioning. This is a serious criticism and it involves the whole system of Marx's thought.

There is, however, much similarity between the general philosophy of humanism, which is some form of evolutionary naturalism, and dialectical materialism. It is becoming more and more widely recognized that dialectical materialism is related to the evolutionary philosophies of the Western world, that is, evolutionary naturalism, emergent evolution, and emergent naturalism. This point is made clear by Sidney Hook:

The recognition that the laws of mechanics, biology, and other sciences contain unique qualitative elements whose analysis demands special explanatory categories is the great differentiating mark between "vulgar" and dialectical materialism. On this issue, dialectical materialism parallels the position taken by the philosophies of emergent evolution and emergent naturalism in England and the United States.⁵

The regrettable part of this similarity is that it exists only in the formal aspect of philosophy, and has not produced any joint participation in social processes on the part of evolutionary naturalists and Marxists. There remains but to examine briefly a few humanistic thinkers, in an attempt to bring out their relation or lack of relation to Marxist thought.

Julian Huxley.-- We have searched through his works on

⁴Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," in Emile Burns (ed.), A Handbook of Marxism (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1935), pp. 230 ff.

⁵Sidney Hook, "Dialectical Materialism," Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933), X, 212.

humanist religion and through his articles as given in the Index to Periodical Literature, and we have failed to discover any clear-cut relation between Huxley's humanism and Marxian philosophy. It is true that Huxley has written a number of articles in popular magazines expressing the thought that the present war of democracy against fascism is part of a general world revolution, but he has not shown specifically his indebtedness to any aspect of Marxian philosophy in doing so.

Corliss Lamont.-- Lamont is practically the only member of the American Humanist Association who is a full-fledged Marxist. He wrote an illuminating article on "The Meaning of Humanism" in a recent number of The Humanist, giving full place to the various strands of thought included under the humanistic label, including Marxian humanism. It is easy to see that his enunciation of the principles of humanism is strongly tinged by Marxian philosophy:

First, a belief, based mainly on the sciences of biology, psychology and medicine, that man is an evolutionary product of the nature that is his home and an inseparable unity of body and personality having no possibility of individual immortality.

Second, a metaphysics or world-view that rules out all forms of the supernatural and that regards the universe as a dynamic and constantly changing system of events which exist independently of any mind or consciousness and which follows a regular cause-effect sequence everywhere and at all times.⁶

When we compare the following passage from Engels, it is clear that Lamont is very close to Marxist thought:

But if the further question is raised: what then are thought and consciousness, and whence they come, it becomes apparent that they are products of the human brain and that man himself is a product of Nature, which has been developed in and along with its environment; whence it is self-evident that the products of the human brain, being in the last analysis also products of Nature, do not contradict the rest

⁶Corliss Lamont, "The Meaning of Humanism," The Humanist, Summer, 1942, p. 42.

of Nature but are in correspondence with it. . . .⁷

Corliss Lamont's article shows a wide sympathy for many different types of humanistic thought, and he includes among these the Unitarian humanism of recent vintage. His sympathy is not so extensive as to admit the validity of the term "religion," and by this denial, he vitiates his whole approach:

Of primary importance is the Religious Humanism advocated by a number of Unitarian ministers and other progressive intellectuals in America. It was this group that issued in 1933 the vigorous Humanist Manifesto, comprehensively summing up their viewpoint in fifteen brief propositions. This interpretation of humanism is fundamentally the same as the naturalistic Scientific Humanism that I have already outlined. But its supporters insist, mistakenly in my opinion, on calling humanism a "religion." In view of the widespread association of religion with the supernatural in some sense, the religious humanists need, far more adequately than they have yet done, to justify their use of the term "religion" for the humanist way of life.⁸

One may agree with Lamont that religious humanists need to use greater clarity in their definition of religion, yet one cannot but feel the implication that for Lamont religion is merely superstition. On this basis, his interests in religion and in Marxism are on a purely secular basis, and it is therefore impossible to find in his writings a positive interpretation of religion related to his positive interpretation of Marxism. This being the case, it is difficult for us to look upon Lamont as a religious Marxist. He therefore falls outside the scope of our inquiry in this Thesis.

One redeeming feature in Lamont's attitude toward the religious approaches to Marxism is his recognition that so-called supernatural views of religion at times contain elements of Marxist thought, while naturalistic views are at times allied to be-

⁷Friedrich Engels, "Anti-Dühring," A Handbook of Marxism, p. 233.

⁸Lamont, The Humanist, Summer, 1942, p. 43.

lief in capitalism. In reviewing Conrad Noel's book, The Life of Jesus, he frankly states:

Some critics, both Marxist and Christian, would consider Father Noel's stand paradoxical. I do not think it is. For it has been becoming increasingly evident to me that there is no necessary logical connection between supernaturalism and social conservatism, on the one hand, and atheism and social radicalism on the other. As a firm believer myself in Socialism I welcome the active co-operation of religious supernaturalists like Father Noel on behalf of that goal, which of course, means that I also welcome their co-operation against Fascism. It is significant that in France the Communist Party has recently been making much of the policy of "the outstretched hand" towards Catholic workers and anti-fascists. The radical parties in other countries have also adopted this same attitude.

All of which has significant implication for Humanism. Humanism is opposed to supernaturalism; it is also in favor of a co-operative society which will abolish war and depression, unemployment and poverty. Now because social and economic issues have such transcendent importance at the present time, I feel much more akin to a religious supernaturalist who believes in a radical social and economic program than in an anti-supernaturalist of any school who believes in Capitalism. In short, are not the social and economic aspects of Humanism considerably more important than its metaphysical ones?⁹

Yes, they should be, but so far little attempt has been made to render them so. It is the increasing dissatisfaction of younger religious humanists with this ostrich-like attitude on the part of older humanists that will cause a change in their present neglect of a social programme. Unless religious humanism can quickly accommodate itself to such a program, it will become merely an intellectual diversion for arm chair philosophers.

The American humanist movement in religion should also be criticized for its ignorance of the literary and cultural aspects of Marxian humanism. American humanists would do well to keep in touch with the inclusive thought of such a literary critic as Edmund Wilson who knows that the development from humanism to Marxism can move toward a much richer synthesis than has been as-

⁹Corliss Lamont, "Jesus the Radical," The Humanist Bulletin, I, No. 1, February, 1938.

sumed by most humanists and Marxists. The following are seeds of wisdom. Let us hope they fall on fertile ground:

The tradition of the Renaissance still hung about Marx and Engels: they had only partly emerged from its matrix. They wanted to act on the course of history, but they also loved learning for its own sake--or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that they believed that learning gave power; for all the intensity of Marx's desire to defeat the antagonist in the class struggle, he declared that his favorite maxim was "Nihil humanum alienum puto"; and he and Engels approached the past with a respect that had nothing in common with the impulse which figured in one phase of the Russian Revolution and which was imitated by Marxists in other countries: the impulse to make a clean slate of culture. . . . There is still in Marx and Engels to the end that sense of a rich and various world, that conception of many kinds of mastery possible for human beings, all interesting and all good in their kinds.¹⁰

Evaluation of American religious humanism and Marxism.--

Such an evaluation is difficult to make for the principal reason that the materials necessary cannot be found. While there is a formal, intellectual, philosophical similarity between Marxism and evolutionary naturalism, this similarity is ignored by humanist writers. When we descend to the arena of history, we find Marxists and alleged supernaturalists fighting side by side against oppression and injustice, while the humanists are still in their "ivory tower," gently musing about the desirability of "a shared life in a shared world." No one would be happier than the present writer to report on a vigorous synthesis of humanistic and Marxist thought. He is compelled to desist because such a synthesis has not yet been done by any leading American religious humanist. Such humanism has ignored both the social and literary relevance of Marxian humanism, and as long as it continues to do so, the race will go to those who have delved more profoundly into the crises and implications of history and found in Marxism some light to illumine the darkness of our times.

¹⁰Edmund Wilson, "Marxist Humanism," The New Republic, May 3, 1939, p. 372.

CHAPTER VII

THE PLACE OF MARXISM IN THE THOUGHT OF PAUL TILLICH

Paul Tillich is Professor of Philosophical Theology at Union Theological Seminary. He was brought over to the United States largely through the influence of Reinhold Niebuhr, whose thought he has influenced to a considerable extent in the last ten years. Tillich, prior to his leaving Nazi Germany had contacts with radical religious groups, and played a very important part in the formulation of "religious socialism" as distinguished from the older and more naive "Christian socialism." He is a frequent contributor to The Protestant. His interests are not merely literary and journalistic for he leads practical study groups in the investigation of sociological and psychological problems. His own system of theology is inclusive of so many elements that at first blush would appear to be incompatible, is so formidable a structure of thought and reflection that we shall not be able to touch it in this present Thesis. We shall content ourselves with a description and analysis of Tillich's approach to Marxism. His approach is more profound than any of the religious Marxists heretofore summarized, and will necessitate a brief evaluation of the larger aspects of his theology.

Tillich's approach to Marxism.-- Many who are puzzled by the peculiar synthesis achieved by Tillich would do well to consult the opening chapters of The Interpretation of History¹ where

¹Paul Tillich, The Interpretation of History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), pp. 1-73.

he gives an autobiographical sketch. A section describes his attitude "On the boundary between idealism and Marxism." Here Tillich shows his indebtedness to certain elements of Marxism, while at the same time he retains as valid some aspects of idealistic philosophy:

The point of procedure of every analysis of experience and every concept of a system of reality must be the point, where subject and object are at one and the same place. From there, I came to understand the idealistic principle of identity--not in the sense of a metaphysical speculation, but in the sense of an analysis of the final elements implied in every knowledge. Up to now no criticism of idealism has convinced me of the inadmissibility of this procedure.²

Tillich is however opposed to philosophic idealism in that it pretends to portray "reality as a whole, instead of its being conceived as an expression of a definite and limited relation to reality."³ This conception of Tillich, according to which reality is always more extensive than can be apprehended by human powers of reason, conscience, or intuition, is one which recurs again and again, and indeed, forms the basis of Tillich's central concept of the Unconditioned Transcendent, or of the Unconditioned Meaning of existence.

Tillich expresses his indebtedness to Marx for a profound criticism of this philosophy of idealism, which pretends to present a philosophy of essence free from contradictions. He thereby finds validity for the concept of "ideology":

According to Marx, philosophy as such (which he identified with philosophy of essence) seeks to obscure the contradictions of existence, to disregard that which is of importance to the real human being, namely the social contradictions which determine his existence in the world. These contradictions, concretely expressed, the conflict of the social classes, show that idealism is an ideology, namely a system of concepts, whose function it is to cover up the contrast of reality. . . .

I owe to Marx, first of all, the insight into the ideological character, not only of idealism but of all systems of thought, religious as well as profane, which as the servants

²Ibid., p. 60.

³Ibid., p. 61.

of power hinder, even though unconsciously, the more righteous form of social reality. (Luther's warning against the self-made God means in religious parlance exactly what ideology means in philosophical language.)

With the repudiation of the closed system of the doctrine of essence, a new conception of truth arises: truth is bound to the situation of the knower, to the individual situation in Kierkegaard and to the social situation in Marx. Only so much knowledge of essence is possible as the degree to which the contradictions of existence are recognized and overcome. In the situation of despair, in which according to Kierkegaard every human being exists, and in the situation of the class struggle, in which according to Marx historical humanity has lived up to now, every system of harmony is untrue. That leads both Kierkegaard and Marx to the point of connecting truth to a particular psychological or social situation. To Kierkegaard truth is just that subjectivity which does not disregard its despair, its exclusion from the objective world of essence, but which holds on to it passionately; whereas to Marx, truth is found in the class-interest of that class, which becomes conscious of itself as destined to overcome the class struggle, the necessarily non-ideological class. Thus arises the peculiar idea, though intelligible from the Christian standpoint, that the greatest possibility of obtaining a un-ideological truth is given at the point of the greatest meaninglessness, of despair, of the broadest self-alienation of human essence. In my pamphlet, Protestantism and the Proletarian Situation, I have connected this thought with the Protestant principle and the doctrine concerning the border-situation.⁴

It was necessary to quote from Tillich at such length in order to reveal his approach to Marxism. All the important contributions of Tillich to Marxist thought are already implied in this quotation, and it will be our task to expand and explicate them at greater length in the present chapter.

Tillich shows his profound appreciation of Marxism in being able to penetrate to the reality of meaning expressed under the forbidding category of "Economic Materialism." He is aware, contrary to the opinions of the vulgarisers of Marx, whether secular or religious, that this category does not reduce man to a mechanical resultant of blind forces:

The conception of Economic Materialism is bound up with the concept of "Marxism" for general thought. But thus the ambiguity of the word Materialism is intentionally or unintentionally overlooked. If materialism were necessarily

⁴Ibid., pp. 63-64.

metaphysical materialism, I should never have been found on the border of Marxism; likewise, Marx himself would be no Marxist in his struggle with materialism as well as idealism. But Economic Materialism is not a metaphysics, but a method of historical interpretation. Economic Materialism does not mean that the "economic" which is itself a complex reality, embracing all sides of human existence, could be the sole cause of all phases of human life. That would be meaningless. Economic Materialism shows rather the fundamental significance of economic structures and motives for the social and intellectual forms and changes of a period. It denies that there is a history of thought and religion which is independent of economic structure; and, thereby, confirms the theological insight, neglected by idealism, that man lives on earth and not in heaven; philosophically expressed, in existence and not in essence.⁵

Along with this appreciation of the true meaning of the method of historical materialism, Tillich is aware of the prophetic element implied in Marxism:

There is prophetic passion in it, whereas idealism, insofar as it is influenced by the principle of identity, has mystical and sacramental roots. In the middle section of my book, Die sozialistische Entscheidung (Socialistic Decision), I have tried to distinguish the prophetic element of Marxism from its rational-scientific terminology, and thus clarify its far-reaching religious and historical effects. At the same time I have attempted to attain a new comprehension of the socialistic principle by linking it to the attitude of the Judaic-Christian prophecy: idealistically, as many Marxists will say; materialistically, as many Idealists will say, but really remaining on the border of the two.⁶

Tillich then makes clear his position in regard to political parties. The previous quotations indicate that he has a much more profound appreciation of the insights of Marxism than is the case with the average European social democrat, or the American socialist-pacifist. His position is one of "fellowship," transcending the limitations of political parties:

My position on the border of Marxism adds nothing new politically to what I have already said about my relation to

⁵Ibid., pp. 64-65.

⁶Ibid., p. 66. We understand that Die sozialistische Entscheidung is now in process of being translated by James Luther Adams, Professor of Theology, Meadville Theological School. Its publication will make possible a more profound appreciation of Tillich's reconciliation of Marxist thought and theological principles.

Religious Socialism. It does not commit me to any party. But were I to say that, in spite of belonging to Social Democracy, I had stood between the parties, the "between" would have to be interpreted differently than it has been in many instances cited within these pages. It means that in my heart I have never, and do not belong to any party, because the most important point in the political realm seems to me to be one which is never expressed in political parties, except in distorted form. My longing has been and is a "fellowship" which is bound to no party, although it stands nearer to one than the other, and which shall be a vanguard for a more righteous social order in the spirit of prophecy and in accord with the demand of the Kairos.⁷

We are now ready to investigate more fully the significant elements of Tillich's thought--a synthesis of vital structures of Marxist thought and theological principles.

Tillich's appreciation of the class struggle.-- One of the most salient approaches in Tillich's radical thought is his appreciation of the class struggle. To him, it is not merely a distortion of reality to be attributed to socialists or communists, nor is it an invention of the disrupters of our social life. Tillich is fully aware of the disintegrating aspects of the modern world, the chaotic cleavages implied in it, and the insights provided by non-Christian thinkers for a comprehension of these cleavages. We sense again Tillich's opposition to a philosophy of harmony and essence as he forthrightly presents the cleavages produced by bourgeois society:

The social and mental splits in the present world are based on the contradictions into which the development of the bourgeois society has driven our economic, political and intellectual life. The analysis of these contradictions, as necessarily resulting from the structure of the modern world, had started in the middle of the 19th century with an astonishing prophetic power. It seemed to be disapproved by the permanent increase and spread of the liberal-democratic ideals and ways of life during the last decade of the 19th century. It was repeated with apocalyptic form in the decade before the world-war years. It is now irrefutably confirmed by the catastrophe in the midst of which we are living. The reality of what seemed to be mere interpretation has become visible even for the most conservative mind. Nobody can deny any more the end of economic expansion, directly in Europe,

⁷Ibid., p. 67.

indirectly all over the world, the consequent loss of fixed capital, the deepening of the economic crisis, the increased danger of imperialistic clashes as a consequence of the narrowing down of the world market, the tremendous speed of technical development as one of the main causes of structural unemployment which can be reduced only by a full or half-dictatorial war economy, the monopolistic-bureaucratic trends towards the centralization of economic power and ultimately towards state capitalism, the psychological effects of economic and social insecurity, expressed in indifference to freedom and democracy, especially in the younger generation, and in readiness to follow anyone who promises a greater amount of security, the intellectual emptiness leading either to cynicism or to a tragic will to death as the meaning of life--all this is a reality nobody can overlook.⁸

Here is as clear-cut an analysis of modern chaotic conditions as could be given by any Marxist. We shall even make the gratuitous assumption that is much more realistic than any given by the American Socialist Party, lost in Norman-Thomas adulation and pacifistic utopian proposals for reform! Tillich wants his readers to face the reality of this disintegrating world of ours and then to profit from the insights of the great revolutionary thinkers, even when they attack the Christian tradition:

We must face the reality of our disintegrating world in its full weight, its tremendous consequences and its threatening structure. We must analyze the reasons for that disintegration in all realms of our existence, in our daily activities and ideas that seem most natural, but are not. We must penetrate our minds with the insight of the great critics of our modern development, even when they are anti-Christian. The Christian churches should stop that easy method of dealing with the great revolutionary thinkers and prophets of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the method of challenging their irreligious attitude and of making men forget in this way the contents of their critical thought. The fact that the most important analysis of our disintegrating world lies outside the Christian sphere, attacking and disturbing it, does not permit the Christian churches, their members and leaders, to overlook the critical work of those people and to seclude the congregations from the real issues of our historical existence. The atheism of Marx is not an argument against his analysis of the disintegrating capitalistic world; and the anti-christian impetus of Nietzsche is not an argument against his prophecy of the ap-

⁸Paul Tillich, "Our Disintegrating World," Anglican Theological Review, XXIII, No. 2, (April, 1941), 136-137.

proaching European nihilism.⁹

It is indeed very gratifying to perceive that for Tillich the atheism of Marx is no reason why the contributions of his system to the present social chaos should be ignored by the Christian churches. Equally realistic is Tillich's attitude to the class struggle. Again and again in his writings recurs his downright assertion that the class struggle is an objective fact of history and not merely a fiction in the minds of radicals and revolutionaries. This chief aspect of the proletarian situation is indeed part and parcel of Tillich's thought, and, as we shall see later, it is an indispensable part of his theology. Let us turn for a moment to Tillich's appreciation of the class struggle.

In the manuscript translation of his essay on Religious Socialism and the Class Struggle, Tillich defines a class in the following manner, to which not even the most orthodox Marxist could object:

A class is characterized by the possession of a common life-situation fundamentally conditioned by economic factors, and by the fact that it stands in opposition to other groups likewise conditioned.¹⁰

This cleavage in society is to be presented without any equivocation. Nor is the task of religious socialism to oppose it:

The sharpness of this formulation corresponds to the frequency and naivete with which it is presupposed by or demanded of religious socialism that it oppose this class struggle. The attempt to separate socialism from the class struggle--an attempt made as long ago as in the controversy over the Bismarckian anti-capitalist laws--would seem comical to anyone who knows the situation if it did not continue to serve among the upper classes as an instrument in the class struggle.¹¹

In this essay, Tillich goes on to state that the task of religious socialism is to unveil the demonic character of the class struggle.

⁹Ibid., p. 143.

¹⁰Paul Tillich, "Religious Socialism and the Class Struggle," Manuscript Translation, James Luther Adams, Meadville Theological School.

¹¹Ibid.

It must not demand socialism without a class struggle, for this would be betrayal and Utopianism. This struggle is a struggle for overcoming a demonic element, a kind of messianic mission. By it the proletariat is raised out of its meaninglessness, and a meaning is given to it. Marxism is then an achievement in giving meaning to the proletariat. In the background of Marxian thought, and often unrecognized by Marxists themselves, is a religious consciousness of fate on the part of the proletariat:

They are destined to fight for a kingdom that will establish itself with fateful inevitability and that therefore can be hindered by no opposition. From this there arises the consciousness of being supported by the Unconditioned, the transcendent.¹²

The religious significance of Marxism therefore lies in the fact that "in it the polarity of all religious thought has been expressed clearly, in a dialectic, though not in a religious, fashion."¹³ In genuine Marxism this level is reached and given expression in a secular form. On the one side a demand for action is addressed to every individual to participate in the various forms of the class struggle. On the other side, there is a faith in the fateful necessity of that to which the commitment is made. Tillich is quite correct in asserting that since Engels this dialectical profundity of Marxism has been lost especially by Western socialism. Our own limited experience of Western socialism along with a comparison of its philosophy and sociology with Marxian writings, confirms in our mind Tillich's pregnant observation on this point.

Marxism, then, implies a religious approach to reality, to the Unconditioned. On the one hand, it reveals a threat to human existence, even the demonic "possession" of a whole society. On the other hand, it certainly implies--though it does not always

¹²Ibid. ¹³Ibid.

assert--the elements of a new faith in meaning, of a new support of an eschatological character. The Marxian parties may speak of a so-called "Marxian science," they make use of various symbols to express the meaninglessness of the proletariat, and yet employ myths to express the fate of the proletariat, and not only its fate, but its creative possibility in destroying old forms and bringing into existence new forms of social organization. A veiled religious faith is really the foundation of the Marxian dynamic. Tillich is quite right in stating in this essay:

. . . and through it all there vibrates the faith that in this way the classless society, the Kingdom of righteousness, the Kingdom of God, is to be brought in.¹⁴

The party of the working-class is then, in a sense, a religious community. It gives the working-man a seat of vocation, and an ultimate unconditioned goal. The utopian element in such a goal is usually unperceived by orthodox Marxists. The typical Marxist propagandist imagines that the Unconditioned, the ultimate creative source of the meaning of life, will be realized in time. This Utopian mentality has its dangers, not merely because it ignores religious principles, but because it may lead to complacency. Relative successes will be exaggerated, and the threat to human existence will be concealed. As a result of the loss of the transcendent reference, the opposition of capitalism to social change may then produce the dangers of disillusion, capitulation, compromise. The presence of disillusion and capitulation to Fascism on the part of socialist and communist parties is an instance in point.

Tillich repeats that the task of religious socialism is to carry through radically the criticism of socialism, but to do it on the basis of socialism. This task should not jeopardize

¹⁴Ibid.

the power of the socialist idea; it should strengthen it by deepening it. There is no such position as that of "beyond the class conflict."¹⁵ In fact, any religious attitude which claims to offer a different position forms the "status quo." In concluding his essay on Religious Socialism and the Class Struggle, Tillich expresses the view that the essential task of religious socialism is to set forth religion and socialism in their real character with such penetration that their unity will become evident. This involves an attitude that is both realistic and religious. The realistic attitude will view reality as such, but it will detect the inner necessity of reality, which is "the transcendent." This is reality in its genuine power. In thus basing its religious consciousness on "the transcendent," religious socialism issues from the Protestant spirit. It relates what is beyond existence to the tasks presented in our historical existence. Tillich guards himself against dualism¹ by stating that he does not present here a holy sphere beside reality. We shall investigate later Tillich's repudiation of dualism. At this point in our study, it is necessary to unfold more completely Tillich's synthesis of the Protestant principle and the class struggle.

"The Protestant Principle and the Social Crisis."-- In this essay, Tillich is aware that such a synthesis is not supported by the facts. He gives many historical examples to illustrate the view that Protestantism and the proletarian situation have little to do with each other. For instance, the long struggle between the spokesmen of Protestantism and those who have made the proletarian struggle the basis of their thinking; the connection of Protestant churches in Europe with the petty bourgeoisie and feudalism, and in America with big business; the alluring

¹⁵Ibid.

overtures of alliance made by the Fascists to the Protestant churches in Germany.

The proletarian situation in so far as it represents the fate of the masses is impervious to a Protestantism which in its message confronts only the individual as an isolated entity with the necessity of making a religious decision, and which leaves him to his own resources in the social and political sphere and views the dominating forces of society as willed by God--or which makes the ethos of the successful entrepreneur the standard for judging the individual as well as for judging whole classes and nations.¹⁶

The fact that socialism has arisen from the proletarian situation means that socialism, both in theory and practice, rejects Protestantism. For the most part the relation between socialism and the Protestant churches is therefore one of opposition. Protestantism, however, presents a universal claim, a claim that would of necessity have to be surrendered, with the ensuing disintegration of the Protestant churches, on the assumption that the proletarian situation is impervious to this claim.

In so far as socialism is a world-view, Protestantism may enter into a more or less fruitful apologetic discussion with it. But in so far as socialism is the expression of the proletarian situation, it poses for Protestantism the question concerning the meaning and the validity of its own unconditioned and universal claim.¹⁷

The only way in which the unconditioned and universal character of the Protestant message may be maintained is then by an extrication of Protestantism from its present status without losing its own inherent character. Such an extrication is possible precisely because the Protestant principle "always transcends its religious and confessional character, that is, it cannot be identified with Protestantism as a historical phenomenon."¹⁸ Tillich expands the meaning of this principle:

¹⁶Paul Tillich, "The Protestant Principle and the Social Crisis," Manuscript Translation, James Luther Adams, Meadville Theological School, Chicago.

¹⁷Ibid. ¹⁸Ibid.

Protestantism has a principle that stands beyond all realizations. Of course, this does not mean that it should be viewed in a normative frame of reference, with the implication that there is more in the "essence" than in the phenomenon, but rather that through the power of the principle the essence itself develops; indeed, it is just in this way that the Platonic opposition between essence and phenomenon disappears. The Protestant principle is the unconceivable dynamic source of all Protestant realization. In view of the fact that the Protestant principle defies conception, it resists any binding attachment to Protestantism or to Christianity or even to religion. As a source that is unconceivable it is a principle in and of itself. But in so far as it represents a basic element that becomes visible and comprehensible in what is founded upon it, it is religious and Christian and Protestant. For only through these its realizations can it be referred to or mentioned at all. Thus the Protestant principle is a principle in and of itself, but as such it carries with it the Christian and Protestant protest against the raising of an actuality to the status of a principle. It is this protest that gives the principle its name: The Protestant principle. For as an unconceivable basis it can take its name from nothing other than the protest against attempts to grasp and "capsule" it as a basis. The negative implication of the word "Protestant" makes it eminently appropriate to serve as the name and the historical manifestation of the principle which exists in its own right.¹⁹

Again Tillich repudiates dualism in his enunciation of this Protestant principle. It does not imply "an other-worldly entity that may stand alongside the objects of this world."²⁰ It signifies the quality in which all our ways of confronting reality, and of being confronted by it, have their ground.

For Tillich, this Protestant principle is directly related to the proletarian situation, and the contradiction between Protestantism and the Protestant principle throws new light on the opposition between Protestantism and the proletarian situation, and socialist forces. The proletarian situation is defined by Tillich as

the situation of that class within the capitalist system whose members are dependent exclusively upon the "free" sale of their physical ability to work, and whose social destiny is wholly dependent upon the turn of the market.²¹

What is the place of the Protestant principle in this situation?

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

Tillich answers this question by relating it to the negative element in the human situation. That is to say, man has a power of self-realization, but carries with it the possibility of going contrary to his true goal. This possibility of perversion is a basic, underivable cleavage in human existence. It underlies all history and in fact makes history possible. Now in the proletarian situation, man's perversion of his essential nature has a social dimension. This point is so crucial for Tillich's thought that we reproduce his words:

In the proletarian situation man's perversion of his essential nature reveals itself as fate in the social dimension. This assertion can be theologically contradicted only by those who conceive of the relation between God and the world as exclusively a relation between God and the soul. Such a conception, however, is not consistent with either the prophetic message or the Protestant principle. The perversion of human existence expresses itself in social demonries just as strongly as in individual demonries and with even more primitive force, and there is just as real and perceptible a collective guilt as there is an individual guilt; neither is to be separated from the other.

From the beginning the proletarian consciousness has been aware of the perversion and inner contradiction of a society that permits such a thing as a proletarian situation to exist. It has at all times emphasized the guilt that attaches to such a society by interpreting it as due to human self-determination; and it has at the same time discerned behind all previous human history the contradiction of man's essential nature manifesting itself in the breaking up of society into classes. In this pessimistic moral judgment of the actual human situation, the socialistic evaluation of the proletarian situation and the Protestant understanding of the universal human situation are brought together. These two conceptions are combined in our assertion that the universally human reveals itself in the proletarian situation. This assertion involves for the genuine Protestant a recognition of the fact that there are situations in which the perversion of man's essential nature is present primarily as a social perversion of his nature and as social guilt; and it involves for the genuine socialist a recognition of the fact that the proletarian situation, far from being simply a historical accident, represents both a contradiction of essential human nature and a demonic splitting-up of humanity in general.²²

For Tillich, the Protestant principle links the general human situation to the proletarian situation as a social example

²²Ibid.

of man's separation from his true destiny. The Protestant principle, in addition, appeals to the whole man, body and spirit, as a unity, and not to a dualistic conception of man as involved in the Catholic system. It appeals to the whole man in all the contradictions of his existence and lifts up the whole man into a relationship with the transcendent. The contradiction of the essence of human nature

reaches from the most primitive threat to existence (which is always present and inescapable) on through all that deprives recreation and work of their meaning and on up to the destruction of the highest natural forms of human association; and this is to be understood as the mass fate of millions and generations of men.²³

Because of the destruction of these forms of human association by the cleavage produced by capitalism, the class struggle results as an inescapable fate:

This double meaning of the proletarian class struggle, that one must fight in the system in order to maintain existence and at the same time transcend the system by severing the connection between the struggle for existence and the class conflict, gives to the proletarian struggle both its significance and its dialectic.²⁴

Moreover, the proletarian situation involves a constant criticism of ideologies:

The deepest need of man in the mundane world--and we have in mind here the need felt by a sociologically homogeneous mass of men and not the need of an exceptional case such as that of individual poverty--tears away the ideological mask; for it provides the criterion for distinguishing what is real from what is merely ideological, that is, for answering the question as to whether an effective remedy is provided. Anything that cannot rescue the proletariat from the perversion of existence in the mundane order is rejected, regardless of whether it tries to camouflage the demonry of the capitalist system through romantic, conservative ideas or through progressive, idealistic ideas.²⁵

This realistic, anti-ideological aspect of the proletarian situation compels radical Protestantism to bring forward its own critical principle, even to suspect that Protestantism itself is an

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

ideology worshipping a "man-made God." And for this reason the proletarian situation vindicates the Protestant principle precisely because that principle is a struggle against ideology.

Again, the Protestant principle contains a positive aspect in the sense that faith in justification implies that man is called to the transcendent fulfillment of his essential nature. Transcendent, in Tillich's mind, means two things: first, a fulfillment that is not to be found in the natural context of man's existence; second, a real fulfillment in man's approximation to his essence. The paradox involved here is unified in the concept of anticipation whose classic expression is: "The kingdom of God is near at hand."

The proletarian situation is also characterized by anticipation:

When the proletariat awoke from its stupor under early capitalism and became conscious of itself as the proletariat, a new anticipation was thereby brought to birth. Indeed, the one did not happen without the other. The anticipation of the proletariat, in accordance with the full, pregnant sense of the word, signifies positively two things: the non-possession of what is anticipated, that is, living in the proletarian situation; and the anticipatory possession of what is hoped for, that is, living in a tension in which the present is already overcome. Just because of his anticipation the proletarian is no longer only a proletarian. The fact that he becomes aware of the inner cleavage of his existence means that this cleavage has itself acquired a new element, namely, a consciousness of itself, and has become a factor in the process of overcoming the cleavage. That is the fundamental difference to be seen in the proletarian situation before and after it was interpreted and molded by Marxism.²⁶

The proletarian situation is further illumined by the Protestant principle in that this principle prevents a purely utopian attitude. What is referred to in all genuine anticipation remains transcendent beyond any concrete fulfillment of human destiny. It transcends other-worldly Utopias and this-worldly, secular Utopias. Furthermore, the attitude of proletarian anticipa-

²⁶Ibid.

tion involves the certainty that the anticipated event is coming and at the same time the feeling of responsibility for its coming:

It is the attitude that is operative in every great revolutionary movement: the certainty that success is destined to come stimulates the highest degree of activity. Nevertheless, it is very significant that Marx gave to this basic, original impulse a rigidly conceptual form, that of the dialectic. . . . In the Marxian dialectic also there still remains something of the paradox of faith in providence, a joining together of genuine necessity and historical responsibility. The course of the historical process (or what Marx calls the pre-historical process) leads with dialectic necessity (though it is not mechanically calculable) to the emergence of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, to the victory of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie, and thence to the abolition of the class society. This necessity does not, however, give to the proletariat the right merely to watch the process, but rather makes the demand that the dialectical necessity be materialized by means of strenuous effort.²⁷

The proletariat is thus "called" to participation in the social struggle. But this calling does not involve any priestly group for the proletariat nor for Protestantism since the Protestant principle is based on a radical laicism--the minister being merely a layman with a special function within the congregation. The proletarian movement, in its opposition to anything like priesthood, lays bare a sort of laity "that, although not even remotely conforming to a theological conception of the laity, does nevertheless bear witness to the human condition, a witness that is concrete and of the highest symbolic power."²⁸ The Protestant lay principle prevents any attitude of condemnation of the proletariat under the platitude that the masses have drifted away from God.

In all these aspects of the proletarian situation, Tillich finds a revitalization of the Protestant principle. He is aware, however, that Protestant churches have not conformed to the true Protestant principle in that they have tended to "capsule" it in Bible, priesthood, or ceremonial. A change is necessary, and

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

this change can come about only if Protestantism will recognize that truth transcends all human fixation. And from this recognition it must draw the necessary implication that truth has a definitely historical and concrete character.²⁹

Other obstacles in the appreciation of the Protestant principle have been pietism, which stressed the relation between God and the individual soul, and liberalism, which stressed the subjective development of the individual personality divorced from social forces. More recent obstacles have been the alliance of Protestant groups with capitalist and nationalist power interests. Tillich's criticisms are full of significance on this point, but they have already been made earlier in this Thesis and need not be repeated here.

The conclusion of Tillich's argument throughout is that

the individual Protestant should know that he is transforming Protestantism, Christianity and religion into an ideology, that he is serving the "man-made God" of his social group, class or nation, when he does not consider the stubborn reality of the proletarian situation as supremely important for the future development of Protestantism as well as of its own religious life. The proletarian situation is not merely something optional to which attention may or may not be given. It is rather the point at which history itself has posed the question to Protestantism, whether it will identify its principle with the particular forms in which it has been realized, or whether it will in the light of its principle accept the challenge that confronts it in the proletarian situation,--and that calls in question a large part, indeed the largest part, of its present-day accomplishment.³⁰

The theological criticism of Marxism in Tillich.-- Enough material has been presented to indicate at great length Tillich's positive appreciation and support of Marxism. We must turn now to his theological criticism from the point of view of religious socialism. The fundamental criticism is involved in the idea of transcendence:

The basic difference between Religious Socialism and Marxism is rooted in their different attitude to the idea of transcendence. There is a kind of transcendence in Marxism: The limits of the present possibilities of human nature are tran-

²⁹Ibid. ³⁰Ibid.

scended by the expectation of a coming stage of justice. A kind of miracle in the transition from the present to the future stage of mankind is presupposed--at least implicitly. And it is obvious that Marxism draws a great deal of its psychological power from this element of transcendence and faith. But this transcendence is not the absolute transcendence of Christianity. It remains in time and space, in history and politics. It is dependent on immanent processes. It transcends the present time, but not time as such. It does not know eternity breaking into time, shaking, turning and transforming the temporal. Marxism never reaches this transcendence. It is suspicious of it. Religion, because of its supra-temporal nature is considered to be an ideology, i.e., a system of ideas and symbols which have no basis in reality, but which are invented for the sake of making the misery of the disinherited classes more bearable to them and, consequently, for the sake of breaking their revolutionary impulse by a mystical opiate. This is the theory of religion in original as well as in late Marxism. Obviously, this theory had to be criticized sharply by Religious Socialism.³¹

Tillich admits that religion has often played the role assigned to it by Marxism, but affirms that Religious Socialism affirms the message of all the great religions in pointing to the transcendent and eternal character of the ultimate fulfillment of history and human life. The Marxian implication throughout is that history is fulfilled within history and not above history. This fulfillment within history leads Marxists into dangerous forms of utopianism.

. . . . they did expect that the economic process in unity with the revolutionary impulse of the proletarian classes would create the fulfilment of history, the classless society in which the main evils of the earlier mankind, of its "prehistory" as Marx called it, would be overcome. Religious Socialism, on the contrary, has always maintained that the demonic forces of injustice, pride, and will to power, never will be eradicated from the historical scene, although special manifestations of it, as capitalism, and nationalism might be conquered. Therefore, Religious Socialism turned the anti-ideological criticism as much against itself and against all the other socialist and Marxist groups as against the enemies of socialism.³²

These differences between Marxism and Religious Socialism are of great importance, but "they do not exclude basic elements of the

³¹Paul Tillich, "Marxism and Christian Socialism," Christianity and Society, Spring, 1942, p. 15.

³²Ibid., p. 16.

Marxist doctrines of history and man by prophetic Christianity."³³

Among these basic elements, Tillich includes the central concept of Marxism, historical materialism, with important qualifications:

. . . . it must be acknowledged by Religious Socialism that Marx is right in emphasizing the material reproduction of mankind as the foundation of the whole historical process. But the distortion of this insight into a mechanistic economics or into a metaphysical materialism must be rejected. The economic sphere is itself a complex sphere to which all other spheres essentially contribute so that they cannot be derived from it, although they can never be separated from it. The dialectical method must be accepted as a method of describing the movements of life and history in their inner tensions, contrasts and contradictions, and in their trend towards more embracing unities. But the distortion of the dialectical method into a universal mechanism of calculable processes has nothing to do with reality and with the original meaning of this method. There are dialectical elements in all life and every historical totality, namely elements belonging to a given structure which drive beyond this structure. These structures can be described only in dialectical terms but not at all in terms of mechanical necessity. Existential thinking, historical materialism and the dialectical method are achievements which never should be lost in Religious Socialism.³⁴

One would almost feel that Tillich had here been reading Lenin, for there is close similarity between Tillich's appreciation of the many-sidedness of dialectical movement and the presentation given by Lenin:

A development that repeats, as it were, the stages already passed, but repeats them in a different way, on a higher plane; a development, so to speak, in spirals, not in a straight line, a development in leaps and bounds, catastrophes, revolutions; "intervals of gradualness"; transformations of quantity into quality; inner impulses for development, imparted by the contradiction, the conflict of different forces and tendencies reacting on a given body or inside a given phenomenon or within a given society; interdependence, and the closest, indissoluble connection between all sides of every phenomenon (history disclosing ever new sides), a connection that provides the one world-process of motion proceeding according to law--such are some of the features of dialectics as a doctrine of evolution more full of meaning than the current one.³⁵

³³Ibid., p. 16. ³⁴Ibid., p. 17.

³⁵V. I. Lenin, "The Teachings of Karl Marx," A Handbook of Marxism, ed. Emile Burns (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1935), pp. 542-543.

It is necessary to point out, however, that this portrayal of the inter-penetrating tensions and ever-widening structures and unities, is, for Tillich, rooted in a transcendental philosophy; and for Lenin, in an immanent philosophy. Tillich offers other sociological and philosophical criticisms of Marxism, but we have dealt here with his fundamental theological criticism of it.

Evaluation of Tillich's synthesis of Religious Socialism and Marxism.-- Tillich has gone more profoundly than any of the previous theologians considered into the reality of the proletarian situation, and the derivation from this reality of its essentially religious character. The great virtue of Tillich's system is that it relates the individual man in his unity of body and spirit to the lodestar of the Unconditioned. In other words, Tillich has a doctrine of man that is illumined by man's historical existence as revealed in the proletarian situation. At the same time, Tillich confronts man in his historical existence with the Unconditioned meaning which transcends any structures of meaning which man can reach in time and place. The very meaning of the Protestant principle is the protest against the capsuling of the Unconditioned in any partial, static, harmonistic theory, whether sociological, theological, or institutional. And we saw that this protest was represented by the proletarian situation in its suspicion of every ideology.

Again, Tillich made clear the veiled religious meaning in the strenuous struggle of the proletariat for a new order. In substance if not in intention this struggle presupposes that there is an order in reality which demands commitment, an order of reality which presents the unfolding of an Unconditioned meaning transcending any static structure of meaning, such as capitalism,

nationalism, Fascism, even Christian socialism. The confrontation of man, in his social as well as in his individual nature, with the Unconditioned, is the merit of Tillich's theology. The merit of his sociology is that he has clothed his theological principles with meanings derived from the most far-reaching appreciation of Marxian doctrines, methods and perspectives, even when presented by anti-Christian thinkers. Time and time again he has stated that this anti-Christian character must not prevent our recognizing the contributions of Marxian thinkers, even when their program would involve a downright challenge of historic Christianity:

From the Christian point of view and therefore from the point of view of an ultimate political wisdom the defense of "Christianity, humanism and democracy" must be carried through in union with a continuous attack on actual Christianity, actual humanism, and actual democracy.³⁶

Equally valuable for some of Tillich's followers is his warning to beware of Anti-Marxism:

But Religious Socialism rejects dogmatic Anti-Marxism as well as dogmatic Marxism, and subjects the scientific attack on the Marxian doctrines not only to scientific criteria but also to the suspicion of being an ideological escape. Especially in the present situation in which Marx is pushed more and more into the background the question of ideological Anti-Marxism has increased in importance.³⁷

The quoting of this remark is prompted by our suspicion that some of the younger followers of Tillich are inclined to utilize such symbols as sin, grace, revelation, the transcendent, as purely theological symbols in an attempt to reinforce traditional conceptions of Christianity against the attacks of naturalism and positivism. These younger disciples of Tillich are apt to ignore the social and revolutionary content of these theological forms

³⁶Paul Tillich, "Our Disintegrating World," Anglican Theological Review, April, 1941, p. 144.

³⁷Paul Tillich, "Marxism and Christian Socialism," Christianity and Society, Spring, 1942, pp. 16-17.

as used by Tillich. Needless to say, Tillich himself would be the first to repudiate such use of his terminology as another "ideology." The complex religious-socialist system of Tillich is a unified whole in which theological principles and radical attitudes, goals, and commitments are inseparably connected. One cannot appreciate Tillich's thorough-going criticism of bourgeois society apart from his central doctrine of the Unconditioned and of the Protestant principle as asserting the genuine power of this Unconditioned meaning to break up every ideology. But again, one cannot appreciate Tillich's Religious Socialism apart from its inclusion of a Marxist appreciation of the cleavages of modern society into classes, of the disintegrating forces of our world, and of the commitment required to eliminate the perversions of our society.

Tillich's Religious Socialism has the further merit of being more profound than the usual idealistic, mystical, liberal, pietistic, and even Christian socialist, approaches to social questions. We have already seen his rejection of idealistic and harmonistic doctrines. Also, his rejection of liberal and socialist views springs from his perception that power-groups and interests and actions are not sufficiently taken into account by facile categories of liberalism. Out of the destructive and at the same time creative forces of society, Tillich derives social meaning for his symbol of the Unconditioned. In that social meaning he finds the root for the criticism of ideologies, those mental constructions which pretend to comprise reality, but which are all too often rationalizations for man's power impulses--in the last analysis, rationalizations for man's departure from his true destiny.

Lastly, Tillich's merit in his approach to Marxism is

that he has laid bare, more completely than other theologians examined in this Thesis, the veiled religious meaning of Marxism. The proletarian situation reveals man in an historical existence in face of both threat and support. The commitment and energy of the proletariat and its allies reveals a dynamic principle at work in men, by virtue of which they achieve at least partial realization of their goals. But more than this, the commitment of the proletariat implies that there is an order of reality to which the commitment is made, an order of reality which gives an earnest of the success of the human venture, and yet is above all realization. The tremendous energy and sacrifice manifested by the proletariat on the edge of disaster, and yet its implicit belief in the fulfillment of its goals in history--these are nothing less than the undeniable marks of a religious faith in the meaning of life as embraced and guaranteed by a larger, more inclusive Unconditioned meaning, rooted in the cosmos, and forever drawing and sustaining men in their earthly life.

There remains but to touch on the question of the presentation of the Unconditioned in Tillich. Is Tillich reverting to a dualism long discarded by moderns when he is using this term? We admit that we are not entirely convinced in this point, but one must state in all fairness that Tillich's writings time and time again deny any reference to a dualistic philosophy of life. His position is that of belief-ful realism:

Belief-ful realism is a total attitude toward reality. It is not a theory of the universe, neither is it a kind of practice but it belongs to a level of life which lies underneath the cleavage between theory and practice. It is not a particular kind of religion or theology. In fact it is not any kind of separate, particular thing. By the connection of belief-ful and realism the most fundamental of all dualisms is called into question and if it is justly called into question it is also overcome. Faith is an attitude which transcends every conceivable and experienced reality; realism is an attitude which rejects every transcending of reality, every transcendancy and all transcendentalizing. In view of the

antithesis of these attitudes it is natural that the mind should be inclined to evade the tension which results from their union. Evasion is possible in one of two directions, either in the direction of a beliefless realism or in the direction of idealism. Beliefless realism forbids all trespassing over the boundaries of experienceable reality. Its noblest form is to be found in positivism, which needs by no means to be irreligious but can assign religious objects the realm of experienceable reality. Pragmatism proceeds in this fashion, very consistently in America, less consistently in the empirical theology of Germany. . . . From the point of view of faith idealism also is a beliefless realism, from the point of view of realism it is too transcendental or transcendentalized. In this double attack from faith and realism idealism is destroyed. It is overcome by one side or the other, historically and systematically, in life and in thought.

. . . . Hence we are led to the surprising result that faith and realism, just because of the tension which prevails between them, belong together. For in faith the unconditioned tension is present and no attitude which weakens this tension can be associated with it. Idealism weakens it, beliefless realism cancels it, belief-ful realism expresses it.³⁸

Again, quite opposed to dualistic conceptions of the universe are Tillich's assertions concerning the transcendent reference (scattered through his writings) implying a dynamic conception of nature including history. Hence, the Unconditioned is presented not as a separate realm of existence, but as a qualitative aspect of nature. There are indeed in Tillich's thought at this point overtones of evolutionary naturalism and even dialectical materialism, but space prevents their fuller investigation. The following quotation is the best we have found in substantiation of Tillich's repudiation of dualism:

To tear nature and history apart and distribute them to two kinds of metaphysics would mean to disrupt genuine elements of reality.

This can be clarified from both sides. We have seen that individuality gains its depth and significance in decision. Now it is obvious that individuality in the psychological and sociological sense rests on a natural basis, and that this natural basis is indissolubly joined with the biological, physical, indeed with the totality of microcosmic and macrocosmic happenings. This, however, means that history is not a separate sphere of abstract freedom over or beside nature; rather it is one as-

³⁸Paul Tillich, The Religious Situation. Translated by H. Richard Niebuhr, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1932), pp. xii, xiii, xiv.

pect of events, which at every moment also contains the other aspect: nature and the totality of its relationships. All history is also nature. An idealism of freedom which overlooks this unity remains abstract and elicits a naturalistic opposition. It is therefore impossible to combine a dynamic metaphysics of history with a static metaphysics of nature. Historical dynamics become pure imagination, if there are no dynamic qualities in nature; and consequently, the static necessity of nature makes all historical happenings a complicated example of universal laws. The opposite is equally true: nature at every moment holds something within itself which is not to be determined by static and immutable laws. That nature is, as it is, with these qualities--and no matter how many of them could be traced back to quantities, the original quality cannot be eliminated--is not derivable; it is fate and therefore implies freedom. The meaning of this original quality of nature, of this underivable existence, finds its highest expression in history. In history, fate becomes visible as fate, implying freedom. In history, nature expresses its mystery: freedom and fate.³⁹

History is not then a separate existence bordering on nature, but is also nature. But "nature at every moment holds something within itself which is not to be determined by static and immutable laws." In other words, there is a principle of Unconditioned meaning in nature, becoming manifest to the human consciousness in history, and demanding man's commitment. It is to the great credit of Tillich that he has been able to present the infinite qualities of the Unconditioned as manifested in the spheres of theology, art, literature, natural science, and lastly, as we have observed in the present chapter, in the sphere of Marxism itself.

We repeat, the social thought of Paul Tillich is worthy of the most careful consideration, both for its apprehension of the crises and decisions of our time, and for its redefinition of the essential manifestations of "the religious situation."

³⁹Paul Tillich, The Interpretation of History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), pp. 162-163.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION - RELIGIOUS APPRECIATION AND RELIGIOUS CRITICISM OF MARXISM

Religious appreciation of Marxism.-- It is now necessary to summarize the results of our inquiry, and to evaluate the religio-Marxist systems which we have examined in the preceding chapters. We shall then be in a better position to establish the elements of Marxian philosophy which are incorporated into these religious systems, as well as to present the criticisms of Marxism from a religious point of view. This discussion will also reveal our own position, and our own elaboration of a Marxian-religious synthesis, in so far as we have been able to produce it at this time.

It is clear from the previous chapters that the religious background of each theologian considered forms the foundation of the appropriation of Marxist elements into a religious synthesis. For instance, in the case of F. H. Smyth, the Anglo-Catholic theologian, it is natural that the doctrines of the Incarnation and of the Eucharist should be given a social meaning drawn from a forthright acceptance of the class struggle and of the forces, both socialist and communist, making for social change. In the case of André Philip, the background of French liberal Christian socialist thought is perceived in the criticism of the apparently non-ethical categories of Marxist thought. When Philip adopted a Christian realist position, his former liberal criticisms were replaced by a more sympathetic attitude to social forces making for social change.

In Reinhold Niebuhr, the criticism of "Christian moralism" and "romanticism," that is of a moral attitude pretending to stand above the battle and condemning the clash of power groups, as if no ethical factors were involved in such clashes, is carried to an ultimate conclusion. This conclusion is reached in the doctrine of ideology which reduces conscience and reason in part to instruments used by power groups to maintain their existence. Niebuhr has a positive appreciation of the situation of proletarian groups, and of their suspicion of moderate and liberal attempts to mitigate their plight. He has therefore a positive appreciation of the class struggle and of ideological frames of thought that deny or emasculate it. He has equally an appreciation of the apocalyptic vision implied in the Marxian "messianic" concept of the working class as the creative agent of a new social order. Niebuhr, however, makes clear that Marxian utopianism is to be rejected because of its neglect of the transcendental reference and of the tragic character of existence. A fundamental cleavage in human nature is assumed to be overcome in the classless society. Niebuhr's realistic theology affirms that this cleavage will remain under any society, for it is based on man's fundamental nature as man, and not on man's nature as merely a result of social conditioning. A neglect of this aspect of man's historical existence leads to arrogant pretensions allied to a total disregard of the transcendental character of a Holy God who judges all human achievements.

Paul Tillich is largely in agreement with Niebuhr in stressing the transcendent and man's cleavage between his historical existence and his destiny. His appreciation of Marxian ways of analysis is more extensive than that of Niebuhr for the following reasons: Tillich is aware that Marxism involves a dialectical

and not a mechanical interpretation of history. He is equally aware that the proletarian situation is an irreducible aspect of bourgeois society. Further, Tillich is aware of the veiled religious situation present in the proletarian movement in that the proletariat feels both threat and support to its existence. Again, the proletariat in staking its life in the creation of a new social order is expressing a dynamic faith in a creative principle of existence demanding the commitment of all men. Tillich has a positive appreciation of this veiled religious faith implied in Marxian goals, while Niebuhr tends to neglect this faith on the grounds that it is not formally expressed in the Marxian writings and that Marx's neglect of explicit religion may lead to arrogant pretensions. Tillich further interprets the present movements of protest against Fascism and capitalism as manifestations of the real meaning of Protestantism, that is; as man's protest against the existential forms constricting the Unconditioned Meaning of Life, whose source is unconceivable and whose possibilities are inexhaustible.

Harry Ward largely disregards the transcendent reference emphasized by Niebuhr and Tillich, except in the cases where it is relegated to vague phrases concerning the function of "the energy of the universe." Ward bases his appreciation of Marxism on the ground that it is the way in which the Christian ethic of love and mutuality may be more progressively established on this earth. In accepting Marxism as "the way" he has gone over to an uncritical absorption of thorough-going Communist policies not shared by his fellow religious Marxists.

We found it almost impossible to work out a synthesis between religious humanism and Marxism for the obvious reason that no American humanist thinker had an appreciation of Marxism that

could compare with that of the theologians previously mentioned.

From these all too brief summaries of the religio-Marxist syntheses evolved, the religious appreciation of Marxism as shared by the writers studied, may be listed under the following factors:

1. A rejection of individualistic ethics negating the clash of power groups and presenting a "moralistic" attitude to the goals of underprivileged groups.
2. A rejection of harmonistic and mystical theories of man's relations to his fellows and to the ultimate source of meaning.
3. An appreciation of the social cleavages permeating bourgeois society, and of the conditioning influence of these cleavages on the entire superstructure of civilization, as implied in the materialistic conception of history.
4. A full appreciation of the Marxist conception of "ideology."
5. An appreciation of the just claims of underprivileged groups to a larger life, and of the need of participation in political activity to realize this larger life.

Religious criticism of Marxism.-- The preceding pages have already made clear the religious criticism of Marxism. Such criticism may be summarized under the following heads:

1. Lack of recognition by Marxist groups that their participation in social struggles implies a veiled religious faith in an ultimate meaning being realized in part in history.
2. Neglect of ethical and psychological and national factors in social situations.
3. Neglect of a doctrine of man presenting a cleavage on a metaphysical basis, and not merely on the basis of a social reflection of class stratification in society. This leads to Utopian hopes of complete harmony after the revolution, or at least in the highest stages of communist society, as if strug-

gles for power either by individuals or classes or groups would be completely eliminated.

4. Failure to recognize that Marxism is itself subject to the criticism of being an "ideology."
5. Finally, rejection of the orthodox Marxist conception of religion as merely an ideology serving the needs of oppressive power groups and bound to disappear in the classless society.

Such are the main points of religious appreciation and criticism of Marxian philosophy. It is now necessary for us to evaluate them. They are all derived from Marxism's apparent neglect of a transcendental reference, and our evaluation will therefore consider this problem more fully.

For reasons which we have indicated in the preceding chapters, we believe the criticism of Marxism as given by André Philip and Reinhold Niebuhr to be exaggerated; while the acceptance of Marxist Communist points of view and policies by Smyth and Ward to be uncritical. In Tillich we find a more balanced appreciation of the religious elements of Marxism, as well as a vigorous presentation of the Unconditioned. We are drawn to Tillich's stress on the doctrine of the Unconditioned especially since he is emphatic in stating that his position of belief-ful realism rejects dualistic systems.

We are firmly convinced that religion as an integral part of man's capacities on this earth, involves a relation between man and the total upsurge of meaning rooted in the cosmos. The particular philosophy or theology in which this total upsurge of meaning is presented is of secondary importance for us. It may be in terms of a Holy God as stressed by Niebuhr. It may be in terms of the energy of the universe, as presented by Ward, and perceived under material and non-material aspects. It may be in

terms of a more inclusive pattern of values, as in Henry Nelson Wieman's empirical theism. It may be in terms of Whitehead's complex philosophy of concretion and appetition. It may be in terms of evolutionary naturalism. It may even be in terms of dialectical materialism, in which the whole dialectical movement of the cosmos is such as to give rise to mind and spirit out of nature. Whatever the formulation given, the substance remains: There exists in the Cosmos a Potentiality of Being that becomes apparent in the historical meanings of the human situation. It is to the credit of John Lewis that he perceived that dialectical materialism implies this potentiality of being:

Eckhart from a very different point of view dissolved the idea of a separate transcendent Deity into the conception of the potentiality of being, rather after the fashion of Whitehead. God is unknowable only because all the potentialities of life are not yet realised. There is nothing more Divine than the human soul. Is this materialism of the Marxist type? If we remember that Marxism never attempts to reduce spirit to matter, but, on the contrary, declares that spiritual activities are the highest functions of matter, we shall see how near the great mystic is to the secularism of Communism.¹

We believe that the task of future religious socialism is to re-interpret this aspect of dialectical materialism away from the narrow positivistic groove in which it is now imbedded, and into a synthesis with an emergent philosophy of nature. Dialectical materialism is not mechanical materialism, but its affinities with emergent philosophies is yet to be fully worked out.

In order to complete this change of orientation, the potentiality of nature must be interpreted at the human level in terms of Tillich's Unconditioned meaning with inexhaustible possibilities. The religious character of this orientation would then be apparent in the commitment demanded by this Unconditioned

¹John Lewis, "Communism the Heir to the Christian Tradition," Christianity and the Social Revolution, ed. John Lewis (London: Victor Gollancz, 1935), p. 500.

Meaning, a commitment in which man finds his highest life. For the purpose of practical religious needs, such an Unconditioned meaning is to be interpreted in human symbols of heroic dimensions orienting the individual worshipper to this Unconditioned meaning. Whether traditional religious symbols, or whether new religious symbols, are to be used in this religious orientation to the potentiality of nature, is a subject beyond the scope of this Thesis.

It is evident that the criticism of religion by Marxism falls to the ground on two chief counts:

1. It is far from established that a transcendental reference always implies ideology and a betrayal of the class struggle, since the theologians we have considered are among the first to participate in the social struggle for a more just society.
2. The very philosophy of Marxism itself implies and depends upon an Unconditioned source of meaning demanding the commitment of the individual--and this is precisely what religion is!

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